Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-THREE • NUMBER THREE • MARCH 1992

Is America on the Way Down?

A Debate

Edward N. Luttwak / Robert L. Bartley

Russia's Chance Richard Pipes

The Jeffries Affair Philip Gourevitch

What Louis Kahn Built Michael J. Lewis

Sepharad '92 Chaim Raphael

"Ghosts" and American Opera Samuel Lipman

Books in Review: Paul Johnson / Paul Craig Roberts / Jonathan D. Sarna / Heather MacDonald / Elliott Abrams

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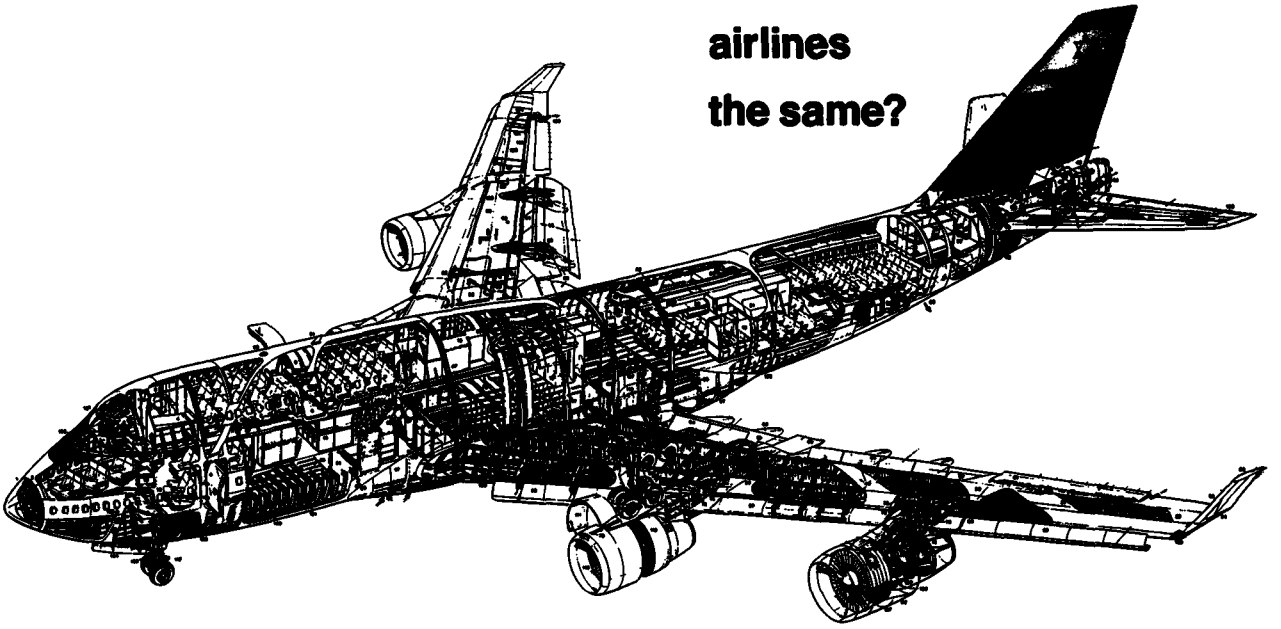

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Commentary

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Letters from Readers

Rape & the Feminists

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I do not share Andrea Dworkin's belief that women lose their integrity when they lose their virginity, I am neither a lesbian nor a "man-hater," and I do not practice or even advocate abstinence. But I must take violent exception to the outrageous thesis of Norman Podhoretz's article, "Rape in Feminist Eyes" [October 1991], namely, that all women want it and that men have a wholesale right, if not an obligation, to give it to them—whenever and however—even if they encounter what Mr. Podhoretz coyly refers to as "resistance." His argument that date or acquaintance rape is an artificial and vague construct, the invention of which conveniently coincides with a radical-feminist plot to discredit and discourage heterosexual sex, is bizarre at best but more likely one more frightening example of just how vulnerable women still are in our culture. Sadly, Mr. Podhoretz's misogynist diatribe proves once again that erudition and intellectual sophistication are no match for chauvinism and arrogance.

Mr. Podhoretz ignores the painfully incremental strides which progressive women and men have made in convincing legislators, jurists, prosecutors, police officers, psychiatrists, and in some cases their own sexually abused sisters that rape is neither the logical nor socially acceptable consequence of either female provocation or what he benignly calls "the ever restless masculine sex drive," but an indefensible crime of violence and violation, the blame for which lies solely with the aggressor and not the victim. Instead, he is encouraging men—particularly young men—to act with singular and ironic disregard for the women they fancy sexually, and admonishing women—particularly young women—to lie on their backs and think of England.

I am curious as to whether Mr. Podhoretz further suggests that these same indecisive, inarticulate, and indoctrinated women, who have the temerity to believe that date and acquaintance rape actually exist—and for whom he asserts "yes" means no, "no" means yes, and "maybe" defies textual analysis—should also fake it, "proving" beyond a shadow of connubial doubt that their erstwhile lovers were right in the first place: he knew she wanted it (despite what she said), so he gave it to her, and who cares—so long as they were acquainted in some vague way before he mistook coercion for seduction.

Thus knowledge, in Mr. Podhoretz's neo-Neanderthal universe, is power. So completely is his definition of rape hinged on the prior relationship of the actors, and so divorced is it from the act itself, that I wonder if he would similarly confuse assent with consent if the subject were Communism and not coitus. To recast the question in terms that are arguably more familiar to Mr. Podhoretz: was the imposition of martial law in Poland merely a frolic and not rape because General Jaruzelski is himself a Pole and not a Russian?

Given Mr. Podhoretz's indulgence of the most priapic excesses of adolescent male sexuality, I fear I know what advice he gave his once-teenaged son: go for it! But how did he counsel his three daughters?

Did he tell them that the ideas which inform Robin Warshaw's "guidelines for change" are, as he puts it, "bland translations of the lunatic prescriptions of an antinomian radical," and therefore they should discard them as rubbish? In other words, did he tell them that it is acceptable for men to "force a woman to have sex"? To "pressure a woman to have sex"? To "equate 'scoring' with having a successful social encounter"? Or, to doubt that "'no' means 'no'"? Did he also tell them that he would advise their brother that "his only hope of ever breaking through th[e] incomprehensible indifference [of teenage girls] is by not taking their no for an answer at any stage in the process of courtship . . . ," and add with a wink and a leer and a conspiratorial nod that this "is precisely what some (and probably most) of them want him to do"? . . .

Can Mr. Podhoretz's politics have eclipsed his parenthood, not to mention his probity? . . .

But what is most galling about his demeaning attempt to reduce the horrible reality of violence against women to a figment of the collective imagination of the femi-

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nist movement's philosophical fringe is his disingenuous assertion that date and acquaintance rape are something new. Mr. Podhoretz dismisses this blatant example of how our culture continues to condone the victimization of women as a recent arrival on the sexual-aggression scene, a novel ploy by women to even the playing field on which they had lost the battle of sexual freedom.

As with wife-beating and other forms of the physical and mental violence some men inflict on women, the only thing that is new about date and/or acquaintance rape is that it has become a topic of public and legal debate. Just as there have always been husbands who beat their wives, there have always been men who impose themselves on unwilling women. Whether the man is that woman's date or neighbor or janitor or boss or cousin or a total stranger makes no difference; nor does it matter whether the encounter occurs in a parking lot, at a frat party, or on a woman's own living-room couch as "reimbursement" for an expensive night on the town, because in this country it is generally the law that a man commits rape when he has intercourse with a woman who is not his wife by force or threat of force, against her will and without her consent. Prior social or sexual intimacy has nothing to do with what is rape; intimidation and domination have everything to do with it.

Legally, that is. Mr. Podhoretz would have us believe that prior social or sexual intimacy has everything to do with what is rape in practice, and this is where he deviates from his fellow adherents of the "she-asked-for-it" school. In Mr. Podhoretz's bifurcated universe, it is rape when a man physically, verbally, or psychologically coerces a woman he does not know to have sex with him; with a woman with whom he has the slightest degree of acquaintance, it is seduction—unless the hand that caresses her tresses also wields a knife or gun or similar nonsexual aid. With this peculiar inequality, Mr. Podhoretz cynically blames the victim, whose double misfortune it becomes to have both known her attacker and escaped armed confrontation, and reserves his sympathy and outrage for those women "lucky" enough to have been attacked by strangers or weapon-toting friends, thus "really raped." To borrow Mr. Podhoretz's phrase, this is truly the new sexual dispensation: politically-correct rape. And in this case I take the position of Mr. Podhoretz and his intellectual cronies against a "PC" view of the world.

ELIZABETH H. BERGER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In his article, Norman Podhoretz attempts to shed light on the problems and misconceptions inherent in what he sees as the growing tendency within feminist circles to view heterosexual sex as a demeaning and abusive activity for the female, regardless of the context or even in the presence of consent. But beware—the article is an emotional one. Mr. Podhoretz is hardly the objective author presenting, without bias, the feminist view of rape. Rather, he comes across as a man clearly burdened with his own experiential baggage as he presents his emotional response to what he perceives to be the feminist—the woman's—view of rape. And in his zeal to discredit the view he attributes to feminists, he succeeds more in revealing his own contempt for women.

Mr. Podhoretz reminds his readers that the word rape has traditionally been reserved for situations where sexual intercourse has occurred by means of physical force. If one is to agree with him on anything it is that the word should, in fact, be reserved for those situations alone, for to use it in any other context . . . is to do an injustice to women who have suffered the terror that accompanies being taken by force. And if the rape is committed by an acquaintance rather than a stranger, it is not date rape; it is rape.

Beyond this, however, it is difficult to agree with very much of the author's thinking. He asserts that what has come to be referred to as date rape but which takes place in the absence of physical force is not rape at all, but rather seduction, plain and simple. OK, he tells us, maybe the word seduction is simply a euphemism for the verbal and psychological coercion all the feminists are squalling about, but this is the way the game has always

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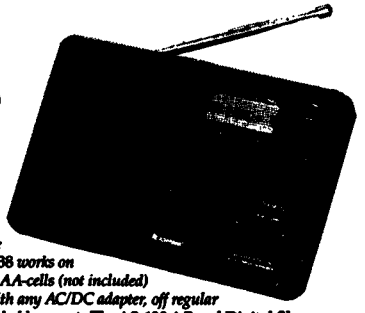

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been played, ladies, and we're not about to change the rules because some of you are not smart enough to watch out for yourselves.

Mr. Podhoretz seems comfortable drawing one bold line to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable male sexual behavior: on one side of the line is sex which occurs by means of physical force where the woman has no power, no choice; on the other side of the line is everything else. In his ignorance he does justice neither to the distinct pleasure—before, during, and after—of openly and willingly surrendering to sexual attraction, nor to the anger, embarrassment, and humiliation that go hand-in-hand with the knowledge that one has been had.

When a person is seduced he or she is choosing to enter into a sexual encounter fully informed of what is going on. There are no false pretenses, no lies; there is no emotional coercion. When a person is manipulated, however, his/her mind is played with; there are no rules. To the extent that a person has the choice to resist in either case, the two situations are alike. But to the extent that the person seduced feels coaxed and the person manipulated feels used, the two phenomena are quite distinct. When a man manipulates a woman into sex, he has succeeded in using the woman's emotions as a weapon against her. The result is that instead of simply not trusting men, she doesn't trust herself. Or even worse. . . .

While we make a point of reserving special status for the victim of rape, it is the very helplessness of the situation which provides the woman's emotional salvation. The woman who has succumbed to emotional manipulation, however, has to live with the fact that choice was available to her and that she made the wrong choice. Choice is really a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it implies that the woman controls her own destiny. Whether or not to participate in the sexual act is her own decision. On the other hand, it implies responsibility. As long as she has the physical power to refuse a sexual encounter, then the responsibility for poor choices lies solely with the woman, Mr. Podhoretz would say, regardless of the tactics undertaken by a desirous male.

The truth is that the emotional state of the woman is the product of what she brings to the situation and what the man is feeding into her mind. And to the extent that he is using her mind as a weapon against her, he shares responsibility for her choices.

Sex does not always mean love, or commitment, or that there will even be a tomorrow for tonight's lovers. What it should mean, regardless of the significance attached to the act, is that both parties have provided informed consent. That both parties are being honest with each other. That both parties know exactly what they are getting into.

KAREN LINDA DEFURIA
Succasunna, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an older feminist I could easily point out the many ways in which my life has taken a turn for the better due to the feminist movement. I have benefited at work, in the way our home is managed, and most of all by the fact that my adult children see their spouses as respected and equal partners. Contrary to Norman Podhoretz, my marriage was not and is not an "armistice"; my acceptance of many of the basic tenets of the movement is not "a covert revulsion against the sexual revolution"; I am not the "helpless and stupid female" of feminist literature nor am I "swaggeringly self-assured, . . . flaunting my sexual allure." And there are no ashes in my mouth because the movement, speaking in my name and presuming to act in my interest, has, as Mr. Podhoretz claims, already done so much damage.

I read selectively, whether it be the writing of "man-hating, lesbian sectors," or the "realities" cited by Mr. Podhoretz which others term "myths," or the many biased writings of many men, including some of our classic Jewish sages. All writers attempt to stake out their interests, but some do it more fairly than others. Andrea Dworkin is not my advocate. However, Andrea Parrot's instructions in her book on avoiding date rape and acquaintance rape make good sense to me. Mr. Podhoretz might even be surprised to learn that I, like him, would want each instance of alleged rape to be judged as a separate and distinct case.

It is my gut feeling, based on conversations with people I know and deal with, that the vast literature which has sprung up on rape is not merely alarmist writing. Nor do I accept Mr. Podhoretz's contention that all feminist writing defies nature's truths and is bringing about no change at all or else change that is harmful to society.

Instead, I believe it is Mr. Podhoretz's vitriolic stance against the feminist movement which is most counterproductive. Moreover, it detracts from the key points of his article. . . .

COMMENTARY readers deserve more balanced writing on this vital issue.

VIVIAN MANN
Golden Valley, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I found many parts of Norman Podhoretz's article intriguing, I'm afraid that I must strongly disagree with one of its main premises. At the risk of sounding like a feminist, I must say that if a woman says no in a clear manner and a man "forges ahead anyway," then what has happened is rape.

Mr. Podhoretz tries to explain the man's actions by referring to the intensity of his desire. Clearly, though, the fact that a party desires something strongly does not make that action right. For example, many African-Americans in New York City desire "justice" from the police. This does not make the stabbing in Crown Heights last year any better than it would have been without these urgings. The arousal of a man does not excuse forcing sex upon a woman.

This is not to say that I agree with the feminist agenda. . . . The trouble with the current sexual-harassment craze is that . . . harassment can be charged without the woman ever saying no in any way, shape, or form. The Clarence Thomas case took this to its logical extreme. Anita Hill told friends about what had allegedly happened, but she never bothered to tell Thomas himself. It is no wonder he protested his innocence: he was never told that he had offended her.

It seems to me that this would be the ideal place to draw a legal distinction. If a woman says no, then that's it. Stop. However, if she never makes any form of complaint, then she cannot expect the man, who most likely is not a mind reader, to know that she was offended. Not only does this fit nicely with the libertarian idea of protecting acts between *consenting* adults, but it also has a result that

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Mr. Podhoretz might like. Women would actually have to make some sort of active decision about sex. If they mean yes they would not be able to say no and hope that the man gets the right message. If they mean no, they have to say no—or else forfeit the right to claim harassment. This solution, while perhaps utopian, would make for a welcome truce in the war between the sexes.

DAVID STEINBERG
Bard College
Annandale, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article on acquaintance rape by Norman Podhoretz throws out the baby with the bath water. In reading it, I was reminded of a college classmate who boasted to me that he drove a girl he was dating to a lonely place many miles from campus. He then gave her a choice between having sexual intercourse or walking back.

In the 25 years that have elapsed since then, many social changes have occurred which enhance the possibility that a woman will be exposed to a situation in which she must participate in sexual intercourse against her will. Women in college are no longer protected by parietal rules or by limitations on visiting men's quarters. They seldom marry soon after completion of high school or college, so that more women participate in dating situations for a longer time, and at a later age, than in the past. The liberalization of sexual mores, combined with more frequent dates by older women and men, undoubtedly lead to situations in which men, appropriately or not, assume that sexual relations constitute a reasonable expectation in many social relationships with females.

In an environment in which the opportunities for acquaintance rape have increased, it is not surprising that the event itself is more common, as is perception of the event. One need not believe that penetration *per se* constitutes a crime against women to deplore coercion of sexual activity. Sexual assault by an acquaintance is notoriously difficult to prove, and the line between persuasion and coercion is murky. Nevertheless, we must attempt to draw that line. Those who merely deplore the exploitation of this issue by radical feminists and who deny that there is a significant problem do not contribute to a solution; they simply abandon serious discussion of the problem to their opponents.

ALLAN J. JACOBS, M.D.
Director, Obstetrics and Gynecology
Beth Israel Medical Center
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The very notion of "acquaintance rape" tends to trivialize legitimate rape, and mocks those women who have been truly brutalized. The perception of everything as rape is not very far from the perception of nothing as rape.

As I understand them, the value scale of the militant feminists is something like this:

1. Man is the natural enemy, and a self-respecting woman should thwart his lechery, aggression, and ego at every opportunity. This is the traditional "battle of the sexes" with heightened consciousness and impassioned self-righteousness. Perhaps Jane Collier's *Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753) might even be resurrected as an inspirational guide.

2. More contemptible than man (who is partially a victim of his physiology), is a woman who willingly submits to a man's lust and is hence even more hateful than the enemy.

3. Despite her despicable behavior, the female quisling often receives desperately needed personal benefits and compensations for her voluntary humiliation. The woman who submits and enjoys herself has no such rationalization, and has placed herself beneath contempt. In addition to being traitorous and shameless, she has also had concupiscence added to the list of her moral transgressions.

MORTON D. KOGUT
University of Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In attempting to make sense of the faddish feminist theory of rape, Norman Podhoretz directs our attention to several of its principal theoretician/perpetrators. . . . In doing so, he seems to take with equal seriousness an Andrea Dworkin and a Susan Estrich. . . . The two are quite different, however.

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as the hapless Michael Dukakis's second campaign manager and she also teaches at Harvard Law School. Thus, she is to be taken somewhat more seriously than the unfortunate Andrea Dworkin whose notions about sexual intercourse suggest, at the very least, that she lives at a considerable distance from the real world and the ordinary people who inhabit it. . . .

It was Estrich . . . who, during the '88 campaign and supposedly speaking for the Democratic candidate in whose cause she was engaged, become one of the first respectable people in the history of Western civilization to go public with the proposition that homosexuals have the "right" to marry. Did she really think through the almost inevitable consequences, political and otherwise, of what she was saying? . . .

Dworkin and the science-fiction, comic-book mode of thought she represents are, as Mr. Podhoretz makes abundantly clear, decidedly peripheral. Estrich, I am afraid, is expressive of a far more ominous, indeed sinister, force. . . .

HAROLD J. HARRIS
Kalamazoo, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article, "Rape in Feminist Eyes," has brought up the subject of the male-female relationship that should be understood intellectually, psychologically, politically, and, I might add, biologically. . . .

We speak of sexual harassment as if the chase were a threat rather than an affirmation of desire buttressed by a hormonal drive. At what point must the male frustrate his hormones or the female hers? Have we reached the intellectual stage in evolution where we can deny our biological heritage in favor of a strange counterproductive biology which frustrates the chase in favor of intellectual restraints? Is that what biology or mankind intended in the evolutionary process? . . .

Some time ago a survey was held among women, who were asked whether, given the choice, they would rather be reborn as male or female. Seventy-five percent of the women reported that they preferred to return as women. . . . It seems that the other 25 percent—presumably, the feminists—are running the female roost, possibly over the objection of most women. . . .

JEROME GREENBLATT
Laguna Hills, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's analysis of the date-rape issue brings out two points that have not been widely discussed: that the campaign to expand the meaning of rape has been strongly influenced, if not dominated, by feminism's radical faction, many of whom are misandric homosexuals; and that their goal in this effort is not equality but complete control of sexual relations.

During the past two decades many COMMENTARY writers have also examined radical feminism's assault on the traditional two-parent family. Careful analysis of this campaign shows that the same faction is at work in pursuit of the same goal of total control. Although the radicals who have managed this effort have been open about their objectives—they were clear to Midge Decter and George Gilder as far back as 1971—they provoked relatively little alarm, in part because their numbers were so small and their goal so large.

Twenty years later it is easier to take them seriously and to demonstrate that they have in fact played a major role in bringing the two-parent family to its present state of crisis. . . .

FRANK S. ZEPEZAUER
Sunnyvale, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . There is a real danger lurking in the trend toward the ever-broader use of the term "rape"—one not identified in Norman Podhoretz's article—and it is that discussion of rape may begin once again to focus inordinately on the issue of consent. It was not so very long ago, after all, that the courts, ignoring the clear-cut line at physical coercion identified by Mr. Podhoretz, considered (in practice, at least) all rape to be nothing more than one end of a continuum whose sole parameter was the degree of the victim's real or inferred consent. Hence matters such as the victim's sexual history and modesty of attire, however irrelevant to an act often carried out with brutal force, were nonetheless deemed generally pertinent because of their possible bearing on the location of a given act on this spectrum of perceived consent.

One of the enduring and genuinely positive achievements of the women's movement of the 60's and 70's has been the correction of this injustice; phrases such as "rape is a crime of violence," while perhaps somewhat simplistic, have had the tremendously positive effect of directing attention toward the real central attribute of rape: physical coercion. This emphasis, lest we forget, was promoted primarily by feminists, and it is to their great credit that they did so.

Unfortunately, the promotion appears to have succeeded too well; for the new generation of feminists is now attempting to exploit that same success in a far riskier enterprise. The current campaign against date rape and acquaintance rape is not simply arguing the case for criminalization of aggressive seduction on its own merits; rather, it is attempting, through liberal use of the word "rape," and of anecdotal characterizations that skillfully blur the distinction between (violent) rape and (nonviolent) seduction, to establish a reflexive association between aggressive sexual advances and the visceral revulsion assiduously (and quite appropriately so) inculcated in all our minds at the thought of the violence and cruelty of rape.

Such an association, should it become commonplace, will have one inevitable consequence: rape will gradually come to be seen once again as a matter of niceties of consent, an act different only in degree from the sexual advances made all the time by men and often welcomed by women; and naturally, behavior on the part of women now seen as possibly inviting seduction (including such routine acts as wearing attractive clothing and makeup) will once again be seen as inviting rape. Rapists will therefore be treated with even more leniency than they now enjoy, and rape victims with even less sympathy. A major advance in our thinking about violence against women will thus have been reversed, and women will have only the most militant among themselves to blame.

DANIEL R. SIMON
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

In "Rape in Feminist Eyes," I tried to show that the definition of rape, which has in the past always

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been understood to mean the use of violence or the threat of it to force sex upon an unwilling woman, is now being broadened to include a whole range of sexual relations that have never before in all of human experience been regarded as rape. At the extreme, we have radical feminists telling us that any act of sexual intercourse is tantamount to rape; watered-down versions of the same idea exempt acts of intercourse initiated and controlled by women; and still more "moderate" mutations extend their grudging approval to acts preceded by an explicit statement of female consent—or, rather, to some such acts, since Susan Estrich and others instruct us that even a woman's saying "yes" to intercourse may mean "no" and is therefore not enough to absolve her male partner of rape.

It seems pretty obvious that this complex of ideas adds up to what Elizabeth H. Berger, coarsely though more or less accurately paraphrasing my main argument, describes as "a radical-feminist plot to discredit and discourage heterosexual sex." To her this argument "is bizarre at best," and yet her own letter shows how influential the feminist campaign to delegitimize male sexuality has become among women in general. She herself is, as she says, "neither a lesbian nor a 'man-hater.'" Passing over the quotation marks in which she encloses the word man-hater, as though to suggest that there really is no such thing, I will take her word for it that in this respect she has little in common with Andrea Dworkin. How much more revealing it is, then, that she should characterize male sexuality with almost as much distaste and contempt as Dworkin does.

Apart from that, and in addition to offering impertinent (and hilariously inaccurate) speculations about what I told my children when they were teenagers, Miss Berger repeatedly accuses me of overlooking points I myself made. Thus I was careful to stress, not once but several times, that forcing a woman to have intercourse by using physical violence or the threat of it is rape, whether the man is a stranger or an acquaintance. The key is not, as she imagines I wrote, "the prior relationship of the actors"; the key is violence (which is why the imposition of martial law did indeed make General Jaruzelski the rapist of Poland). Conversely, there is no rape when physical violence or the threat of it is absent.

Karen Linda DeFuria also indulges herself in impertinent speculations about my personal life, but unlike Miss Berger, she at least understands the distinction I was drawing between seduction and rape. When, however, she goes on to explain why seduction is also bad for women, she too comes perilously close to the position of the radical feminists from whom she seems to dissociate herself, thereby demonstrating once again the extent of radical influence over women in general.

No doubt Vivian Mann is as wonderful in every possible way as she informs us she is. But she should recognize that this does not dispose of criticism of the feminist movement's ideas as expressed in its canonical writings, and of the consequences of those ideas as observed in contemporary society.

I fear that David Steinberg *does*

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sound like a feminist. If he had more respect for masculine experience and less for feminist ideology, he might recall that there are subtleties and shadings and nuanced responses in the relations between men and women which that ideology, in its hatred of normal sex, wishes to blot out; and he would perhaps resist instead of helping this vicious tendency along.

Similarly with Allan J. Jacobs. The "many social changes" of the past 25 years which have left women less protected than they used to be were engineered by feminists out of disrespect for the nature of normal male sexuality. Now the same feminists want to restore protection by, for all practical purposes, criminalizing normal male sexuality altogether. As a man, Dr. Jacobs might want to start worrying about *that* "significant problem" for a change.

I thank the other correspondents for their comments, all of which I find suggestive and many of which I agree with—and especially the warnings issued by Morton D. Kogut and Daniel R. Simon against the trivialization of real rape by the date-rape ideologues.

Jewish Population

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In response to Edward Norden's "Counting the Jews" [October 1991], let me say that there is only one reason that . . . compels one to be a Jew and makes being a member of the Jewish people a thing of greatness and destiny. . . . There is a God, Who is the God of history, Who created the world, . . . Who appeared before an entire people and declared, "Now, therefore, if you will keep My covenant then shall you be a special treasure unto Me above all the nations.". . .

It is this law, this Torah, that created the Jews as a nation and as a nation with a reason to be different. If not for this, the Jew becomes as anachronistic as the Bulgarian or the Canadian or the Frenchman, as absurd and as dangerous a propagator of nationalism as any of the others. . . . If not for this, why not melt and indeed dissolve? If not for this, what need for the pathetic, illogical, and costly suburban temple and its services at which we Jews raise high the scroll of Moses and cry out "This is the Law that Moses set before the Children of Israel, by the word of God," and don't believe a word of it? . . . Moses would not recognize the Judaism of the suburban temples; he would descend the mountain again and smash the golden calves from Miami Beach to Malibu. . . .

To be a Jew is to understand that God is alive and well and that, like it or not, we are His people, sworn to obey His law, which is not some philosophical plaything to be bandied about in *havurot* or adult-education classes, but clear and precise instructions contained in the written and oral laws that combine to make up the total Torah. . . .

DAVID FEIN

Scarsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I find myself in disagreement with Edward Norden's diagnosis of the causes of the shrinking of American Jewry. He suggests that the prevailing atmosphere of general acceptance in American society is primarily responsible for growing assimilation and that, by implication, only a measure of anti-Semitism has prevented Jews from being submerged into the melting process. He seems to lose sight of the fact that Jews assimilated in large numbers in 18th-century England, in 19th-century Germany, and, indeed, as far back as Roman times, despite hostile attitudes and the existence of officially sanctioned discrimination.

What has kept Diaspora Jews from disappearing into the dominant society has always been a unique kind of communal structure which is still in place in Orthodox communities, where the top priority continues to be an all-encompassing Jewish education well into adulthood. Reinforcing this total commitment to Jewish schools is a pervasive understanding that sending one's children to public schools is *unthinkable.*

When the Conservative and Reform movements set up their institutions in the late 1800's, no attempt was made to put into place such an all-embracing educational system. As the cornerstones for magnificent synagogues were laid, no thought was given to building day schools. The three-day-a-week, two-hour Hebrew-school sessions provided a little knowledge but not much else. . . .

The question that has haunted me for years is why almost all the Catholic families in my community, which is about 40-percent Jewish and 40-percent Catholic, send their children to parochial schools (including high school and often Catholic colleges), whereas only a tiny minority of Jewish residents, though temple members, enroll their children in Jewish day schools, which, increasingly, only parents with substantial means can afford.

Thirty years too late, many couples look back with deep regret upon their failure to immerse their children in an atmosphere of Jewish learning and Jewish life. When their children were young they innocently followed what everyone else was doing and what seemed to be sanctioned by the religious authorities as well. By the time these children were dispersed to colleges all over the country, their Jewish identity had long since eroded, if indeed it was ever formed.

RUTH JANKO

Bayside, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his fine article, "Counting the Jews," Edward Norden provides the shocking results of the $400,000 Federation of Jewish Philanthropies survey. "Of Jewish marriages dating from before 1965, 10 percent were intermarriages; from 1965-74, 25 percent; from 1974-84, 42 percent; and since 1985 more than half." Still more shocking than the figures for intermarriage are those for apostasy: 210,000 Jews born and raised as such, have converted; 1.1 million products of intermarriage are practicing or being raised in another religion.

The real shock, however, is that in the wake of these statistics, there has been no shock, no convulsion, no radical reallocation of funds, no new ideas, no strategy for stemming the tide, no Operation Exodus out of assimilation and back into Judaism. Given the deplorable level of Jewish education and religious life, the present malaise was perfectly predictable. Indeed, there were those who predicted it ten, twenty, thirty years ago, and more. But to no avail. If the plumbing breaks down, that is an emergency which *must* be corrected. But no such emergency was felt by our national organizations. Nor will it be felt today as a result of the latest tragic survey.

And I refer not only to the local Jewish Federations. The religious

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agencies, for example, have not done much better. I know the Conservative movement best. What new idea has it had since the creation of the excellent network of Ramah summer camps and the Solomon Schechter day schools several generations ago? Reform for a while sent up signs of hope by affirming Zionism and reclaiming parts of the tradition it had abandoned, only to counter this healthy tendency with the adoption of patrilinealism (the more easily to affiliate intermarried couples) and to obliterate it altogether by undermining the family with homosexual rabbis. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, has known what to do, and has done it, mobilizing its limited resources to create a network of day schools which are paying off handsomely today. It is ironic that the religious body least able, intellectually or sociologically, to offer a cogent way of Jewish living and thinking for the modern American Jew seems to be doing so most successfully. It is difficult to believe, however, that its fundamentalism and ever narrowing application of Jewish law will appeal to more than a small minority. . . .

The options are not . . . limited to Orthodoxy or Zionism; we need a normative American Judaism which is both reverent toward tradition and relevant to our lives today. Instead of surveys, we need strategies to stem the present tide of vulgarity . . . which has invaded Jewish religious and communal life; we need bold proposals for action, model schools and synagogues, and generous funding. . . .

Twenty-five years ago or so at a gala black-tie dinner for an annual meeting in Toronto of the Jewish Federations, the main speaker, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, was introduced just after a report had been given on a planned quarter-million-dollar survey of the condition of the American Jewish community. Heschel rose, approached the microphone, and proceeded to address the wealthy chairman of the dinner. "Do you have a penny?" he asked. To the amusement of the audience and the consternation of the chairman, Heschel insisted on the requested penny until he received it. Holding the coin aloft, he said: "Mr. Chairman, I can save the Federation a quarter of a million dollars. I shall give you the results of your planned survey of the status of the American Jewish community for this penny, and I shall do it in two [Yiddish] words—*takke shlekht* [pretty bad]!

"Now spend your money on doing something about it!"

SAMUEL H. DRESNER
Jewish Theological Seminary
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Norden's article provokes three comments, the first of which is partly a technical point about statistics. Using totals or averages as he does is the standard and easiest way to describe a group and to predict its future. However, if the group is composed of two segments which are following quite different paths, then using a total—or average—to cover both segments will conceal the interesting dynamics and may prevent the statistics from having predictive power. My favorite example of this mistake is attempting to predict how long it would take to cut down a tree by taking the average of the time it would take for someone using a chain saw and for someone using a pocket knife. . . .

It is not unreasonable to think that there are two groups of Jews in the U.S. today: a large group that is steadily growing smaller through assimilation and low birth rates, and a small group that is growing rapidly because it is vibrantly successful, attracting others, and choosing to have more children. This second group includes not just Hasidim in black coats, but also educated Jews who are not afraid to participate in the modern world—many of whom have chosen more Jewish education and observance than their parents, and whose lives joyously center on their Judaism. . . .

Today the first group is so much larger that it dominates the statistical picture and conceals the dynamics that we need to see in order to know what to do. . . .

My second point is that Mr. Norden greatly understates the matter when he talks about the *worldwide proportion* of Jews "continuing to shrink." . . . To look at the number of Jews in relation to the rest of the world population we need to consider that part of the rest of the world that we can touch. In the past it was a very small segment because most people were isolated in traditional villages. But in the next century or so the number of people who have enough education to relate to the world will increase by some eight billion. In relation to that category of people, the proportion of Jews will not just shrink, but plummet—even if the absolute number of Jews does not decline at all. . . . At the same time, however, this means that we will have a greater potential audience for our message in the next century than we have had in all the years since Moses gave it to us.

My third point is the most fundamental. Mr. Norden misses the current challenge to Judaism when he concludes by asking, "Must a smaller Jewish people . . . necessarily be a weaker . . . or a less consequential one as it begins its next 4,000 years?" More likely there are two possible paths for Judaism in the future, and neither is the path of gentle decline sketched in his article. One possible path is that of success, where Jews learn to make their Judaism a joy and a strength . . . , and as a result they grow in numbers. The other path, continued division and failure to maintain commitment, is likely to lead within a century or so to the virtual elimination of Judaism as it has existed, and of Israel.

The number of Jews in the future does not depend on the factors Mr. Norden discusses with such grace and mastery, but on whether Judaism can become a successful religion. What is required is not primarily changes in Jewish law or in the nature of the religion, but in the ways in which the religion is actually practiced. . . .

Only if Judaism becomes more successful for most Jews (the test is whether it helps them to raise children of good character) can it succeed in Judaism's task of being a light to the nations. . . .

Jewish birth rates and assimilation are not independent variables. They will be determined by the success of Judaism as a religion. If living Judaism becomes more true to itself, Judaism will become successful and Jewish birth rates will go up, assimilation will go down, and conversions to Judaism (at first mainly by descendants of Jews) will multiply. If not, instead of the comfortably shrinking future envisaged by Mr. Norden, there will be an increase in the momentum of Jewish decline comparable to the speed with which someone falling from the top of the Empire State Building goes by, say, the tenth floor.

MAX SINGER
Chevy Chase, Maryland

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Norden credits me with writing a "notorious article"; characterizes me as "the most pessimistic of the pessimists"; and reports that as a result of this article—"The American Jewish Population Explosion," *Midstream*, October 1977—I "was denounced far and wide as an alarmist and a terrible demographer." I am modestly pleased to accept Mr. Norden's accolades because he proceeds to report current data that disturbingly support the projections of the U.S. Jewish population erosion about which I speculated fourteen years ago.

Now he has positioned himself for similar denunciation by the same types who expressed displeasure at what I wrote. As he reports, there still are Jewish communal and organizational leaders, superficial commentators such as Charles Silberman, and even academics who cannot quite cope with reality. These are the types who react in alarm, e.g., "It can't happen here," and reach for straws in the wind, e.g., "The Hasidim will make up the deficit."

I did not set out to seek notoriety; I am not a confirmed pessimist; and I am not a demographer. But I was pleasantly surprised that my piece provoked some discussion, . . . because that was its modest intent. The "notorious" speculations were prompted by the results of a demographic exercise conducted by two colleagues at the Harvard Center for Population Studies who are card-carrying demographers.

I was astonished at the numbers, and though they may have been statistical artifacts, they nevertheless suggested a trend in the U.S. population which in fact has occurred and accelerated in the intervening years.

I take no pleasure in the fact that the pessimistic projections reported in my piece were confirmed by the 1990 survey. The Jewish population erosion, current and prospective, is a depressing reality. And the 1990 survey has been buttressed by other authoritative work that reports the actual behavior of the offspring of mixed marriages. . . .

The key issue is the retention rate—the expression of Jewish identity by the offspring of mixed marriages. Mr. Norden cites the distressing trends reported in the 1990 survey: 72 percent of the children of mixed marriages do not identify as Jews, as the mixed-marriage rate itself has climbed from 9 percent before 1985 to 52 percent since 1985. It is difficult to put these numbers in a favorable light.

Everyone is looking for the magic bullet, but judging from the numbers and trends, the damage control is not working. The Reform movement has redefined Jewish law to ease entry into the Jewish community and there is increasing interest in outreach to the unconverted and unaffiliated. But even in light of fully justified anxieties, the organized Jewish community, with its ambitious range of concerns and the competing claims on its declining resources, still does not make the retention of its population base its first priority. . . .

Today's challenge is the survival of large numbers of committed Jews in a free and open society. In terms of survival, the Jewish encounter with free, open, secular societies since their emergence in the early 19th century has been a mixed experience. The increased levels of toleration, of civil and political rights, and of access to all manner of economic and social opportunity have strengthened the Jewish political and economic presence, while weakening the demographics. It is ironic that when it finally arrived, the political and social model to which Jews have traditionally been committed could threaten the future of a thriving Diaspora.

But the Jewish demographic experiences in pre-World War II Europe, the United States, and other free countries pose the question of whether Judaism as we know it today can persist in societies where exclusion and discrimination are no longer legalized or legitimate. In these free Diaspora societies, Jews obviously will have to find inner resources to enjoy both the freedom and their Jewish commitment.

If they do not, it appears inevitable that Israel will become the exclusive Jewish center, linked to outposts in a truncated Diaspora populated principally by the devout. It is not an encouraging vision of the future. But perhaps, as Mr. Norden suggests in his conclusion, a smaller Jewish population may not necessarily mean the end of Diaspora Judaism.

ELIHU BERGMAN
Washington, D.C.

EDWARD NORDEN writes:

David Fein is right—if more American Jews were Orthodox, they would definitely have more babies and there would be less intermarriage. By the same token, if more fish had wings, there would be more airborne fish. A mass return to the old-time religion is hardly worth mentioning except to say that it is nearly inconceivable.

A popular system of Jewish day schools and universities, such as the Roman Catholics have, and such as Ruth Janko would like to see, is not so inconceivable, yet the questions about it are as many as they are discouraging and obvious. Who would pay for it? And what would be the line of indoctrination? Orthodox? Ultra-Orthodox? Conservative? Reform? Zionist? Diaspora-affirming? Feminist?

On the other hand, Samuel H. Dresner understands that Orthodoxy is not the wave of the future and plumps instead for "a normative American Judaism which is both reverent toward tradition and relevant to our lives today." Presumably, such a Judaism, if we could only agree on what it consists of and put our minds and our checkbooks to it, would turn the intermarriage and birth-rate figures around.

For his part, Max Singer thinks that if only the Orthodox rabbis would shape up, the Jews of the Diaspora would be able not only to hold onto their own, but also to make innumerable converts.

All this is very well-meaning and dubious. The statistics, as I tried to show, are only the latest points along a rough curve starting with the emancipation in the thirteen American colonies and Europe a couple of centuries ago. The operative factors have been secular host societies in the Diaspora and the rise of a Jewish state, both of which are here to stay for a long time to come. Handwringing, finger-pointing, and the search for a magic bullet are therefore at best irrelevant activities.

I hope that, unlike some of the letter-writers, other readers of my article did not take it as some kind of call to arms or panic signal. I merely sought to report what is happening, to indicate what the future probably holds, and to suggest that maybe it isn't a bad thing that soon Israel will be home for most of the Jews—that way lies normality, not only for Israelis, but for the Diaspora also. Yet while a

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shrunken Diaspora is inevitable, and not necessarily a problem, it would probably not be a good thing for that Diaspora—especially its American component—to be tiny. What made Elihu Bergman's article in 1977 notorious was his projection, quoted by me, that by the year 2076 there would be "no more than 944,000 [Jews] and conceivably as few as 10,240 in America." None of the freshest data indicates anything so drastic in the offing. Maybe by ignoring those numbers Mr. Bergman is now admitting that his computer went haywire.

Aid & Eastern Europe

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, "How Not to Aid Eastern Europe" [November 1991], Nicholas N. Eberstadt makes some good points about foreign-aid mistakes of the past. Unfortunately, his article is itself a thing of the past. The entire approach of the Agency for International Development (AID) in Central and Eastern Europe is radically different from the development projects of the 1970's and early 80's. Mr. Eberstadt mentions only three projects out of some 150 (which represent less than 10 percent of the funding) as typical of the entire program. This is not true. Moreover, he charges that there is little in the record to suggest that any projects contribute to economic liberalization or development. This is also not true.

Let's look at the record. Let's judge these three examples, not by whether they are "old-" or "new-"style assistance but by whether they fit Mr. Eberstadt's foreign-aid criteria of promoting investment, developing a better business climate, and helping health and human-capital development.

The first example Mr. Eberstadt cites is a project where U.S. assistance is helping two model housing developments in Poland. The housing shortage throughout all of Eastern Europe limits economic growth by limiting labor mobility. This project helps two cities, Bialystock and Zory, in setting up the laws and procedures for a private housing market. Success here can be replicated in private housing markets elsewhere in Poland.

The second example is the 300,000 tons of feed grain provided for livestock in Bulgaria. This feed grain was used by small private farmers to help them make it

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Loan Guarantees for Settlement of Soviet Jews

Should the U.S. Play a Role in this Humanitarian Enterprise?

Only a few months ago, the world was able to watch the thrilling spectacle of the airlift of 15,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. But the rescue of the Ethiopians, heartening and important though it is, is really only a "sideshow" in the ongoing saga of this ingathering. The greatest challenge facing the Jewish state today, almost even more daunting than the implacable hostility surrounding Israel and the ever-present military challenge, is the ingathering of the Soviet Jews.

What are the facts?

■ For years it had been one of the great policy objectives of the United States vis-a-vis the Soviet Union to allow the free emigration of its citizens. Of all the nationalities in the Soviet Union, the Jews are by far the most endangered and the most anxious to leave the country. Finally, the gates have begun to open – a little slowly at first, but then wider and wider. Under U.S. immigration laws, only a small number of these Soviet fugitives are able to come to our country. The vast majority plan on settling in Israel. And that is as it should be. Because the state of Israel has one single purpose: the ingathering of Jews, especially those that are persecuted and who are in need, from all corners of the world. And it doesn't make any difference, of course, whether they are "Europeans" or whether they come from the Arab countries, from Asia or, as now in the case of the Ethiopian Jews, whether they are black Africans.

■ So far, about 300,000 Soviet Jews have arrived in Israel. A total of about 1 million are expected within the next three years. Since the population of Israel is about 5 million, that is equivalent to the United States having to absorb about 45 million new immigrants – more than the population of the states of California and New York combined – and that within a 3-year period! And the United States is a rich country and an immensely large one. Israel is a poor country. Its per capita income is less than $10,000 per year and more than one-half of the country's budget is dedicated to defense. And it's small: the size of the country is one-half that of San Bernardino County in California. The Soviet immigrants come virtually penniless, because they may not take more than $100 out of the country. There are no ready jobs, and there is no ready housing. It is a daunting and almost overwhelming task to absorb these people. It is estimated that it will ultimately cost more than $50 billion.

■ But Israel is determined to overcome this challenge, to build the 260,000 new housing units that will be needed, to build the 12,000 new classrooms, to create the 360,000 new jobs, and to integrate the 1 million Soviet Jews into Israeli life, just as it has done with over 1 million previous immigrants. Israel and world Jewry will carry virtually all of the cost of this absorption and will create the massive additional infrastructure needed to sustain a population increase of over 20% in just two or three short years. In this fiscal year alone, more than $6 billion or 20% of Israel's budget will go toward absorption of immigrants. The American Jewish community will have raised more than $4 billion and has agreed to co-sign a further $900 million guarantee to help with these costs.

■ There is one urgent matter, however, in which the assistance of the United States will be needed. Israel will ask the United States to *guarantee* (not to grant, not even to lend) $10 billion for housing, funds that will be needed, in $2 billion yearly installments, over a 5-year period. This is a financial transaction that is virtually without risk and at virtually no cost to the United States. In contrast to many of the developing countries, Israel has never defaulted on a loan and has never asked for "forgiveness" of any indebtedness. It has a perfect payment record. American guarantees of this $10 billion loan are absolutely required in order to make the orderly absorption of Soviet Jews into Israel possible.

The matter of the loan guarantee has been deferred for 120 days, at the request of the President. In view of the cataclysmic events in the former Soviet Union, the need for this guarantee is now more urgent even than before. As with all other financial assistance to Israel, the funds under this guarantee will be used only within Israel's 1967 borders. No funds will be used to settle Jews in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). But the United States must focus on the humanitarian nature of this enterprise. It must not be "linked" and must not be conditioned upon any political issues, such as the procedural questions of the peace process, the question of settlements in the administered areas, or any other "concessions". Israel, like the United States, is a country of immigrants and a beacon of liberty and of hope. The United States should approve the $10 billion loan guarantee to Israel – its best friend and staunchest ally in the world – and should assist, virtually without risk and expense to itself, in one of the greatest liberation movements of our times: the exodus of 1 million Soviet Jews and their orderly absorption in Israel.

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through the difficult winter. It was a one-shot deal, to keep farmers in this drought-stricken country from having to slaughter their herds. The fact that so much of the national herd survives today is due to this critical U.S. government assistance. By selling most of the feed grains through Bulgaria's first private commodity exchange, we also helped strengthen a new free-market institution in Bulgaria.

The third example Mr. Eberstadt cites is a family-planning program in Romania. This program was a legislative mandate by the U.S. Congress out of concern for the Ceausescu legacy of banning contraceptives, which led to one of the highest maternal death rates in the world, in large part because of dangerous abortions. This is the only family-planning program in the entire East European portfolio and is being run through private organizations which provide health care and safe contraceptive advice to women.

Since Mr. Eberstadt's three examples cover such a small portion of the program, let me mention the other 90-plus percent of aid to Eastern Europe. The vast majority, nearly all of it, in fact, goes to the private sector. The program is designed to encourage investment and to improve the business climate. We have set up private-enterprise funds in countries which have already loaned some $100 million to hundreds of budding entrepreneurs. Hundreds of retired U.S. executive volunteers are working in companies throughout Eastern Europe to help them with their business and accounting systems and to identify new markets. We have sent scores of privatization experts to Eastern Europe to help privatize everything from a national airline to state farms. We have set up large-scale management-training programs through partnerships with U.S. business schools and universities.

Energy-efficiency teams from the private sector have visited 48 industrial plants and refineries throughout the region and identified energy savings of up to 20 percent in these plants. And to make them happen, we followed up with U.S. equipment. Our advisers provide pricing and privatization advice to the East European governments so they can reduce the huge energy-cost bite out of their budgets. We help fund U.S. private-sector executives and engineers who volunteer their time to help Central and East European companies install environmental equipment, reduce hazardous waste, and become more efficient.

When it comes to building democracy, Mr. Eberstadt has little confidence that AID has any comparative advantage. Well, I would challenge anyone to move $8 million in the four-month period just before the first democratic elections in Eastern Europe. AID may not have had initial experience in the region, but we found out who did and channeled this money quickly and effectively through the National Endowment for Democracy to the National Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and other organizations including Freedom House, the Polish American Congress, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and the AFL/CIO Free Trade Union Institute. The fledgling democratic opposition throughout Eastern Europe quickly received campaign training, fax and copy machines, vehicles, loudspeakers, newsprint, and election observers through our assistance.

And this new democracy effort continues. AID printed and sent over 600,000 new depoliticized textbooks to Albania this fall so that primary-school children could begin their first year of school without text and pictures hailing the late dictator Enver Hoxha. We fund the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training (ORT) to train former political prisoners in Albania, many of whom have been imprisoned for 50 years and whose families were denied schooling and any privileges.

Mr. Eberstadt also doubts that AID can do anything to help the health problems of industrialized modern societies. Had he bothered to look, he would have seen our $5 million health-partnerships program. This enables U.S. hospitals and medical teaching institutions to help update hospitals in Eastern Europe with cardiovascular, cancer, and emergency-medicine training and equipment.

Mr. Eberstadt is an academic who is normally right on the mark about foreign aid, so it is disappointing to see him here on automatic pilot—reiterating justified criticisms of past foreign-aid programs when and where they are no longer justified. Even the overarching theme in his article misses the mark. On the basis of just four characteristics, Mr. Eberstadt says that we cannot distinguish long-term aid recipient countries from the Central and East European countries at the time of their revolutions. Making an amazing causal leap, he asks, therefore, why should U.S. aid be expected to help Eastern Europe evolve away from its current characteristics, much less in the direction of self-sustaining economic growth?

First of all, to imply, as he does, that the developing world is similar to the Central and East European countries is a bit simplistic. The human-resource base of the region is vastly different, with high literacy rates and highly skilled scientists and engineers, the mark of all developed societies. The Central and East European countries experienced the industrial revolution, which is not the case in the typical aid-recipient country. And finally, the political leadership in Central and Eastern Europe is the product of revolutionary change. There is a much deeper emotional and ideological commitment to free markets compared with how traditional developing countries have flirted their way into this system.

There is simply no comparison between the reforms being undertaken by the Central and East Europeans and most developing countries. Contrary to Mr. Eberstadt's conclusion, this allows our *new* foreign-aid approach really to maximize the aid dollar and work ourselves out of a job. This is what foreign aid is all about, and this is what we are doing in Central and Eastern Europe. I am confident that Mr. Eberstadt too would see this if he would only look closely at this program and at this time.

CAROL C. ADELMAN
Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C.

NICHOLAS N. EBERSTADT writes:

Carol C. Adelman is a friend and colleague for whom I have high regard. I am gratified that she thinks I am "normally right on the mark about foreign aid," and that she agrees with me, in her final paragraph, about the poor record of aid for "policy reform" in developing countries in the 1980's. Her disagreement with me only concerns her estimate of the AID program she is currently administering—a program that she

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understandably insists to be "radically different from the development programs of the 1970's and the early 1980's."

I find her letter unconvincing.

Let us examine Mrs. Adelman's defense of the three AID projects in Eastern Europe that I mentioned. These projects, contrary to her claims, were far from being unrepresentative of AID's overall effort; they were in fact specifically highlighted in the State Department's Public Affairs publication, "U.S. Assistance to Central and Eastern Europe: An Overview."

The explanation for the family-planning effort in Romania, apparently, is that Congress mandated it. This is a justification by political exigence, not a demonstration of merit. The explanation for the surplus grain disposal to Bulgaria is that it "[kept] farmers in this drought-stricken country from having to slaughter their herds." Yet the Bulgarian ambassador to the United States himself assured me only this month that there was never any such danger. The explanation for the project in Poland seems to be that, by building more public housing, AID will somehow stimulate the construction of private housing. Such rationales, alas, are no different from those characteristic of AID programs in the 1970's, the early 1980's, or in fact today in regions outside Mrs. Adelman's purview.

Mrs. Adelman's own choice of examples from her AID portfolio does little to bolster her case. She suggests that AID's "energy-efficiency" missions are promoting liberalization in Eastern Europe. But in point of fact, there is nothing intrinsically "liberalizing" about advice on energy efficiency. If there were, the Communist regimes which governed Eastern Europe before the "revolutions of 1989" would not have been so interested in the topic. As for privatization, it is ill-advised to take credit for "help[ing] to privatize . . . a national airline." The airline in question, Poland's LOT, is bound by local laws stipulating that 51 percent of the corporation's shares must remain in the hands of the state. By any reasonable definition, Mrs. Adelman's privatized airline would still be government-owned and government-controlled when privatization is completed.

Finally, I am perplexed by the notion that AID would be "set-[ting] up private-enterprise funds" for loans to "budding entrepreneurs." Just as a domestic beneficiary of government spending can be a ward of the state on either local or federal programs, so an entrepreneur is not made self-sufficient by relying on the largesse of foreign rather than domestic taxpayers. A parallel point obtains for the private-sector activities AID finances in Eastern Europe through American constituent groups.

Confusion on the part of donors over just what the term "private" means may help to explain the conspicuous lack of progress in privatization in Eastern Europe over the past two years. That confusion, in fact, is one of the reasons I argued that "American development-assistance policies, for many years, have been more likely to lead a prospective beneficiary toward an East-European-style morass than to help it escape from one." Such confusion has been characteristic of AID's general approach, and of the approaches of other international donors, for a generation or more.

There is one argument in Mrs. Adelman's letter which I do find compelling and exciting. This is the notion that an objective of foreign-aid programs should be to "work ourselves out of a job." As the past experiences of Taiwan and South Korea may demonstrate, economic development can be stimulated by the *termination* of foreign economic aid. It is more than unfortunate that our development-assistance bureaucracy has purged this fact from its institutional memory. I look forward to hearing more details about the reintroduction of this long-forgotten instrument for stimulating policy reform and material advance abroad.

Isaac Bashevis Singer

To the Editor of Commentary:

Thank you for Joseph Epstein's illuminating eulogy—no, make that paean, instead—to the late Isaac Bashevis Singer ["Our Debt to I.B. Singer," November 1991]. Mr. Epstein proves once again that he possesses not merely a lively intelligence and piercing insight, but, perhaps more important, a generous and understanding heart.

Bill Swing

Portland, Oregon

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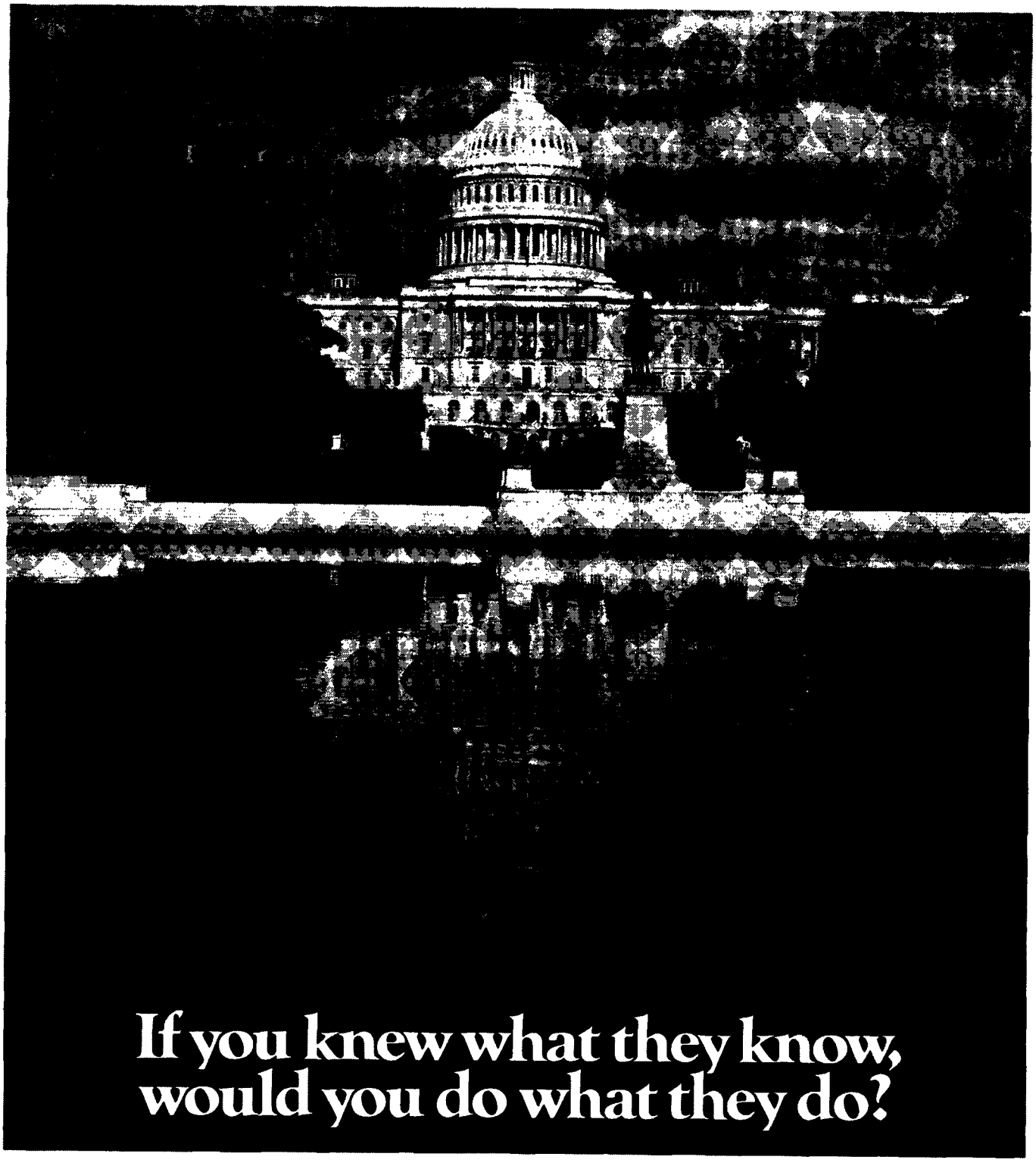

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Is America on the Way Down?

Yes: *Edward N. Luttwak*
No: *Robert L. Bartley*

The idea that the United States is in decline might itself have been expected to decline with the collapse of the Soviet Union and our emergence as the only remaining superpower. But declinism, instead of disappearing, has now shifted its focus from the political, ideological, and military conflict with the Soviet Union to the issue of economic competition, especially (though not exclusively) with Japan. Unlike the declinism of the late 80's, moreover, this latest mutation has found support not only among liberals, for whom it served as a weapon against the arms build-up sponsored by Ronald Reagan, but also among conservatives like Edward N. Luttwak *(who had been critical of the old school). Other conservatives, however, such as* Robert L. Bartley, *are if anything even less convinced by the new school of declinist thought than they were by the old.*

Mr. Luttwak, who holds the Arleigh Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., is working on a book that will develop the themes he explores here. Mr. Bartley, editor of the Wall Street Journal, *has already completed a book on these and related matters, and he draws on it for his own article below; the book is called* The Seven Fat Years: And How to Do It Again *and will be published by the Free Press in May.*

Edward N. Luttwak: When will the United States become a third-world country? One estimate would place the date as close as the year 2020. A more optimistic projection might add another ten or fifteen years. Either way, if present trends simply continue, all but a small minority of Americans will be impoverished soon enough, left to yearn hopelessly for the lost golden age of American prosperity.

Nor can American decline remain only economic. The arts and sciences cannot flower and grow without the prosperity that pays for universities, research centers, libraries, museums, the theater, orchestras, ballet companies. It was the ample earnings of Italian traders and bankers that fed the scholars, painters, sculptors, architects, and poets who gave us the Renaissance. When Italy was by-passed by the new flows of oceangoing trade, its impoverished merchants and bankrupt financiers could no longer commission artists or keep scholars at their work, so that economic decline was followed in short order by the bleak downfall of Italian art and scholarship.

Finally, democracy too must become fragile once better hopes are worn away by bitter disappointment. What Americans have in common are their shared beliefs, above all in equality of opportunity in the pursuit of affluence. It would be too much to expect that democratic governance would long survive the impoverishment of all Americans except for a small privileged minority of inheritors, agents of foreign interests, and assorted financial manipulators.

When Buenos Aires was still a leading world metropolis, when the people of Argentina still enjoyed their famous steak-at-every-meal abundance that lasted into the 1950's, they would never have believed that their future would be a 40-year slide into poverty. Equally, the citizens of the U.S., still today by far the richest country in the world, steadfastly refuse to recognize what future is in store for them unless they can alter the course they are now on. Yet the simplest numbers confirm the slide, and suggest the chilling forecast.

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In 1970, Americans were two-and-a-half times as productive as the Japanese, and twice as productive as the citizens of the European Community on average.[1] By 1980, the pattern of decline had already set in. The United States was still well ahead of the European Community and Japan, but its edge had been cut in half in a mere ten years, while West Germany had actually overtaken it.[2]

At that point, in 1980, a simple straight-line projection of the sort that professional economists deplore as much too simplistic would have suggested that in one more decade the United States would be overtaken by the richer Europeans and by Japan. And that is exactly what happened.[3]

This being a 20-year trend and not just a brief downturn, it is perfectly reasonable to calculate what the future numbers would be if the United States were to remain on its present path. Already in the year 2000, Japan's gross national product per person would be twice that of America, while the richer European countries would have a 50-percent edge over the United States. Ten years after that, Japan would be more than three times as productive per person as the United States, and the richer European countries would be almost twice as productive per person as the United States.

Finally in 2020, when the children of today's middle-aged Americans will themselves be middle-aged, the richest Europeans would be more than twice as productive, while the gap between Japanese and Americans at 5-to-1 would be just about the same as the 1980 gap between Americans and Brazilians. At that point, the United States would definitely have become a third-world country—at least by Japanese standards. Certainly Americans would no longer be in the same class as West Europeans.

Actually, this particular trend is already well-established. In the 1950's, even young Americans traveling to Europe on student budgets could stay at the best hotels and eat in the best restaurants. Coming from a far more productive society, they found that the pocket money of summer jobs or minor parental handouts was quite enough to pay for European luxury. Today American students still travel to Europe, though they now complain that the high prices keep them out of all but the cheapest lodgings. As for the luxury hotels that once depended on American customers, they are now filled with Japanese and European tourists, with only a few Americans still able to afford their rates. If the 2020 projection holds true, none but the wealthiest Americans could travel to Europe unless there were a demand for casual labor, more or less as the poor of Latin America and Caribbean peasants now come to California and Florida for the harvest.

As of now, tens of thousands of young Americans live in Japan as illegal immigrants at any one time. Many teach English to pay their way, but many others work in bars and night clubs or as models of various kinds. American girls serving as bar hostesses and part-time prostitutes are now so common in Tokyo that their services no longer command a premium—though there is still a fair demand for blondes. When a country is in economic decline, not only its currency but also its flesh is cheapened.

There is no doubt that to project the future by simply extending the past is a procedure truly simplistic, because unexpected changes can always outweigh continuities. But so far, at least, the path seems straight enough—and straight downhill. It is also true that international comparisons can easily be distorted by abrupt exchange-rate fluctuations: one reason Switzerland reached the astounding gross national product of $30,270 per person in 1989 was that the Swiss franc happened to be very high during that year. Moreover, all fluctuations aside, exchange rates routinely deform comparisons because they reflect only the *international* supply and demand for capital, goods, and services denominated in any particular currency (as well as speculation and central-bank manipulations), and not the much greater amount of purely domestic transactions. Hence currencies can be greatly overvalued or undervalued as compared to their purchasing power at home.

Because the United States has chosen to open its markets to imports to a much greater extent than most other countries, let alone famously import-phobic Japan and Korea, the great outflow of dollars reduces the exchange rate far below the dollar's purchasing power at home. If we rely on a measure based on purchasing-power parities, we find that the United States scores much higher in international comparisons.[4] Yet while purchasing-power values can depict living standards more or less realistically, it is only compari-

[1] As measured by the gross national product per capita, which was $4,950 for the United States; $2,360 for the European Community; and $1,950 for Japan.

[2] The 1980 figures were: for the U.S., $12,000; for Japan, $9,870; and for the European Community, $9,760 (but West Germany came in at $13,340).

[3] The 1989 GNP per capita for the United States was $21,000, while Japan's had soared to $23,810. Distorted by the entry of three poor countries, Greece, Portugal, and Spain, the figure for the European Community was $15,980, or 76 percent of the American level, but Germany at $20,750 was substantially even, while Switzerland, Europe's top performer, was well ahead at $30,270.

[4] In 1988, the last year for which those particular figures are available, the gross *domestic* product (all factor costs plus indirect taxes minus subsidies, and excluding net factor income from abroad, which is included in the GNP) per person was $19,558 for the United States; $14,161 for West Germany as it then still was; $16,700 for Europe's champion, Switzerland; and only $14,288 for Japan (as opposed to the straight exchange-rate GNP comparison for that same year, in which Japan's $20,960 per person already exceeded the $19,820 figure for the U.S.).

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sons based on straight exchange rates that determine the "who-does-what-to-whom" of the international economy—including the little matter of which parties can buy attractive pieces of other (open-door) economies, and which parties can only sell them off. And that, of course, can make the enjoyment of even splendid living standards somewhat ephemeral.

Finally, if we switch to the purchasing-power plus gross-domestic-product criterion, we find that although the United States is still ahead, the trend is just as unfavorable as it is with other measures, and the pattern of relative decline just as evident.[5]

To be sure, both the gross national product and the gross domestic product are indeed gross measures: a car accident increases both of them by the amount of ambulance, hospital, and bodyshop bills, while a healthy drop in cigarette smoking reduces them as sales and excise taxes go down. Nor can any international comparison be free of all sorts of distortions, large and small, no matter what criterion is employed, if only because the different consumption preferences prevalent in different countries are hard to equate. And yet, after all possible objections and all proper reservations are listed, it cannot finally be denied that the totality of all the relevant numbers contains irrefutable evidence that the American economy has long been in severe decline by world standards—and still is.

MANY observers would reach the same verdict without need of any numbers. Follow a traveler from Tokyo to New York—though it would be much the same if he came from Zurich, Amsterdam, or Singapore. After leaving his taxi at Tokyo's downtown City Air Terminal—a perfectly ordinary Tokyo taxi and therefore shiny clean, in perfect condition, its neatly dressed driver in white gloves—our traveler will find himself aboard an equally spotless airport bus in five minutes flat, with his baggage already checked in, boarding card issued, and passport stamped by the seemingly effortless teamwork of quick, careful porters who refuse tips, airline clerks who can actually use computers at computer speed, passport officers who act as if it were their job to expedite travel, and bus crews who sell tickets, load baggage, and courteously help the encumbered while strictly keeping to departure schedules timed to the exact minute.

Then, after an hour's bus ride over the crowded expressway to the gleaming halls of Tokyo's Narita international airport, and after the long trans-Pacific flight, when our traveler finally arrives, he will be confronted by sights and sounds that would not be out of place in Lagos or Bombay. He has landed at New York's John F. Kennedy airport.

Instead of the elegance of Narita, or Frankfurt, or Amsterdam, or Singapore, arriving travelers at one of the several JFK terminals that belong to near-bankrupt airlines will find themselves walking down dingy corridors in need of paint, over frayed carpets, often struggling up and down narrow stairways alongside out-of-order escalators. Those are JFK's substitutes for the constantly updated facilities of first-world airports. The rough, cheap remodeling of sadly outdated buildings with naked plywood and unfinished gypsum board proclaims the shortage of long-term money to build with, of invested capital. Equally, the frayed carpets, those defective escalators, and the pervasive minor dirt reveal how day-to-day money is being saved: by deferred maintenance—the most perfect sign of third-world conditions, the instantly recognizable background of South Asian, African, and Latin American street scenes, with their potholed streets, dilapidated buildings, crudely painted signs, and decrepit buses.

If the sheer lack of capital to provide proper facilities is the first third-world trait, the second is undoubtedly the lack of skill and diligence in the labor force. This phenomenon will be brutally obvious as soon as our traveler arrives in the customs hall, where baggage is contemptuously thrown off the incoming belts in full view of the hapless passengers. By then he will be too exhausted to complain: after a long flight, he is likely to have waited for hours to have his passport examined.

In due course, if our traveler transfers to a domestic flight, he may well encounter airline porters already paid to place suitcases on conveyor belts who nevertheless ask for tips in brusque undertones, just as in Nairobi or Karachi, sometimes hinting that the baggage might not arrive safely if no money changes hands. And he will in all probability then be trapped in slow lines while imminent flight departures are called out, waiting to be checked in by untrained clerks who tap on computer keyboards very slowly, with one finger.

Here, then, is the final trait typical of the third world—the chronic disorganization of perfectly routine procedures.

If our traveler is headed for a Manhattan hotel, he can choose between a dirty, battered, and possibly unsafe bus, or a dirtier and more battered taxi, usually driven by an unkempt lout who resembles his counterparts in Islamabad or Kinshasa rather than in London or Tokyo, where licensing requirements are strict and dress codes are enforced. At that point, a first-time visitor

[5] In 1970, the figures for the United States, West Germany, Italy, and Japan were $4,922, $3,380, $2,848, and $2,765, respectively. Because there was so much inflation in the years that followed, all those figures had greatly increased by 1988. The U.S. figure for 1988 was just under four times greater (x 3.97, to be exact); the West German increase was somewhat greater (x 4.18); the Italian increase was greater still (x 4.55), in spite of the notorious undercounting caused by the explosion of Italy's underground economy during those very years; while Japan's figure was more than five times greater (x 5.16).

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may still believe that both airport and taxi are glaring exceptions to the America he had always ima-gined—clean, modern, efficient. If so, he will immediately be disillusioned by the jolting drive over potholed highways and crumbling bridges, through miles of slums or miserable public housing.

Not as colorful as in Jakarta or Madras, the passing scene will still amaze those who come from the many European and even Asian cities where slums are now reduced to isolated survivals in remote parts of town (New York tour guides report a growing demand for the thrills of the South Bronx from European tourists quite uninterested in its pleasant greenery or the zoo, but eager to see open-air drug dealing at street corners, and the rows of burned-out buildings). After this unsettling encounter with an America already in full third-world conditions, an affluent tourist will next reach the luxurious glitter of a Manhattan hotel, but even there beggars may be standing near the door, just as in New Delhi or Lima.

IT SEEMS only yesterday that the professional optimists among us were still pointing to the continued American dominance of the world's entertainment, biotechnology, and aviation industries to reassure us that all was well, in spite of the virtual extinction of the U.S. consumer-electronics industry, the steady retreat of the auto industry, the drastic decline of the steel industry, and the widespread collapse of the machine-tool industry, still very much the foundation of all other industries.

Since then, Columbia Pictures has been sold to Sony, which had already purchased CBS Records in a previous transaction; the multimedia industry leader MCA has been sold off to Matsushita; Time-Warner, which includes HBO, has been partly sold to Toshiba and C. Itoh for $1 billion; and other notable names now belong to French and Italian interests. Word has it that it is only a matter of time before the remaining entertainment giants will go on the block in full or in part. Even hugely successful Disney, long the toast of Wall Street, chose to sell off the ownership of the hugely profitable Disneylands in France and Japan to local investors, in a typical exercise of capitalism-without-capital in the new American style.

Thus, Michael Jackson records may still sell by the millions all over the world, and American films may continue to dominate the global market, but the profits and the resulting opportunity for further capital accumulation now accrue to foreign owners.

Then there is the biotechnology industry, the *locus classicus* of the dynamic creativity and bold entrepreneurship that are supposed to compensate for all the other weaknesses of the American economy. The names of both buyers and sellers are far more obscure than in the Hollywood pairings, and the deals are much smaller (e.g., Chugai's $100 million purchase of Gen-Probe), but the great sell-off is under way just the same.

The pattern is by now well established. Americans still do most of the inventing, but because they cannot find capital at home to build the required facilities, they sell out to Japanese and European companies, receiving millions in license fees for products whose sales can eventually earn billions. Unfortunately, it is only those millions—and not the billions that will be earned mainly by foreign companies—that can be taxed to pay for basic research as well as all other government expenditures. As it is, the United States spent $5 billion on biotechnology research in 1990 as compared with only $1.7 billion for Japan, and less for Europe, but it is the Japanese and Europeans who are prospering, in great part by selling products originally developed in the U.S., mostly at the taxpayers' expense.

Now it is the turn of the aviation industry, which contributed $23.6 billion of exports to alleviate the U.S. trade imbalance at the last count. For all its success, it too is desperately short of capital. Boeing's only U.S. competitor, the McDonnell Douglas Corporation, recently announced that its commercial division, maker of the familiar DC-9, among other aircraft, is to become a separate company, so that 40 percent of it can be sold to the Taiwan Aerospace Corporation for $2 billion. Of that, only half a billion is for fresh investment—much less than the cost of engineering a single new airliner nowadays—while the remaining $1.5 billion is to reduce the company's crushing burden of debt, amounting to $2.6 billion at the last count.

THAT places McDonnell Douglas in a very crowded field. For it is not only our public and private finance that is already in third-world conditions, with the federal government,[6] many state governments, and most large municipalities hugely in debt. Nor is it only a multitude of banks and insurance companies as well as the notorious S & L's that are badly undercapitalized, if not actually insolvent—with another 400 expected to fail in 1992. Many industrial and commercial enterprises of seemingly solid standing are also afflicted with the McDonnell Douglas disease of excessive debt; they too are surviving on bankers' doles ("unscheduled refinancing"), just like the much more colorful real-estate tycoons who once bought everything in sight with money recklessly borrowed and recklessly lent. And every day another great name among our major corporations falls below even that minimal standard, with bankruptcies that leave pension funds short, medical benefits cut

[6] The latest official estimate of the fiscal 1992 deficit is $340 billion—a catastrophic number *five times* larger than early 1991 White House estimates.

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off, and customers as well as suppliers abruptly stranded, often with large invoices unpaid. Because many of them are in turn badly undercapitalized, they too can easily be dragged down into bankruptcy, spawning still further insolvencies.

But to return to the airline industry: some time before the McDonnell Douglas sale was announced, even Boeing decided that it could not afford the investment needed to engineer and produce its next airliner on its own. Having failed to find partners in the capital-starved U.S. aircraft industry, it turned to a Japanese consortium which now has a 20-percent risk-sharing partnership in the future Boeing 777.

As in the case of biotechnology, therefore, a leading industry, whose advancement owes much to basic research and specific technologies that U.S. taxpayers have funded in one way or another, is selling pieces of itself to foreign buyers, instead of only selling them its products.

When a farmer is reduced to selling off his broad acres rather than only his crops, his ultimate fate is not in doubt. Of course the analogy should be false because instead of a waning stock of acres, there is the unending flow of new technology that comes from the constantly celebrated creativity of our pluralist, multi-ethnic, undisciplined but ever-dynamic society.

Note, however, the small print that accompanied the dramatic announcement of the very latest example of that famous creativity. As soon as the suitably Korean-born chief developer of digital High-Definition (HD) TV revealed that the suitably small company he works for had totally overtaken the Japanese giants and their merely analog HD-TV, the company's owner, General Instrument, let it be known that it would not even try to raise the capital needed to produce and market the new invention, preferring to license production to established TV manufacturers, i.e., the Japanese TV giants.

In a manner literally pathetic, for pathos is the emotion evoked in the spectators to an inevitable downfall, a company spokesman hopefully speculated that if 20 million HD-TV sets were sold annually, its royalties at $10 per set could amount to as much as $200 million a year, a nice bit of change as they say—but truly mere change as compared to the $20-25 *billion* that the actual producers would earn each year, largely, no doubt, by exports to the United States.

But that is by now standard operating procedure, given our bootless capitalism-without-capital. It was Ampex, a U.S. company, which first developed the video-recorder technology that was then licensed for mere change to Matsushita, Sony, and the rest of those vigorous exporters—though of course their VCR export earnings did come back to the United States, through the purchase of CBS Records, Columbia Pictures, and MCA.

It is all very well to speak of the "globalization of industry" and to deride concerns for the nationality of production in an era of "transnational manufacturing," but when Taiwan acquires 40 percent of Douglas, or Japan's consortium has 20 percent of the next Boeing airliner, they assume no such responsibility for funding future U.S. aviation research, or Medicare for that matter—and the future earnings from those efforts will accrue to their balance of payments, and not ours.

WHAT is happening to the U.S. aviation industry in particular exposes the embarrassingly wide gap between the realities of what I have labeled geo-economics, and the free-trade-plus-globalization fantasy that remains unchallenged dogma for so many Americans, not least in the Bush White House.

To begin with, the American aviation industry's only significant foreign competitor is the European consortium Airbus Industrie, which has been very successful of late even against Boeing, by selling its government-subsidized aircraft with the aid of government-subsidized loans at low interest. Similarly, Taiwan Aerospace is a government-guaranteed company, no more exposed to the vagaries of the free market than the Vatican; as such, it will always be able to count on government subsidies to underbid Douglas subcontractors, thereby taking over specialized manufactures conducive to its own planned growth into an independent maker of civilian airliners.

The wider meaning of such narrowly-aimed industrial subsidies and "national technology programs" is plain enough. Just as past generations were put in uniform to be marched off in pursuit of geopolitical schemes of territorial conquest, today's taxpayers in Europe and elsewhere have been persuaded to subsidize geo-economic schemes of industrial conquest. The free-trade true believers smile at such foolish generosity, and invite us to enjoy the resulting subsidy of our own consumption. Thus they safeguard the interests of the citizen-as-consumer, while ignoring the interests of the citizen-as producer, but of the two roles it is only the latter that comports with the satisfactions of achievement and the dignity of employment. Moreover, the benefits of subsidized consumption that displaces our own production can only last so long as we still have acreage, famous buildings, golf courses, industries, and new technologies to sell off.

As for globalization, while 40 percent of Douglas can freely be bought by Taiwan, or 40 percent of Boeing could be bought by Japan at any time, a U.S. buyer would have rather greater chances of being allowed to acquire 40 percent of the Sistine Chapel than 40 percent of Mitsubishi Industries.

It is this flat refusal of reciprocity that justifies concerns over the scope of Japanese direct investment in U.S. manufacturing and research companies—far more consequential acquisitions than

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Rockefeller Center or any number of golf courses. At the last count, total European direct investment in the U.S. was still very much larger, at $262 billion, than Japan's $69.7 billion. But it is not racism that accounts for the widespread concern over the latter and not the former, as even well-informed Japanese sincerely believe. Almost all European countries positively encourage almost all U.S. acquisitions and almost all forms of U.S. investment, while in Japan, as in Korea, only the likes of soft-drink bottling plants can be established or acquired without hindrance.

For free-trade-plus-globalization true believers, this entire discussion of foreign investment in the U.S., and of the barriers to U.S. investment in Japan and Korea, misses the point entirely. Foreign investment, they ceaselessly point out, brings jobs, thereby neatly offsetting the consequence of their other article of faith: import-caused unemployment. Equally, U.S. investment abroad exports jobs, and if other countries are foolish enough to keep it out, the loss of optimal earnings for capital is compensated by the retention of employment within the United States. Both claims are perfectly valid, but to leave it at that, as many do, ignores the wider implications of foreign investment on both sides.

In the first place, when U.S. auto production, for example, is displaced by the output of foreign-owned "transplants," the complete employment pyramid of technical designers, development engineers, stylists, corporate managers, and sundry ancillary professionals is decapitated, leaving only the base of assembly-line workers with a few junior-executive positions thrown in.

And this is precisely the object of the geo-economic competition that is increasingly dominating the main arena of world affairs, now that geopolitics is being provincialized to the unfortunate lands where armed conflict is still plausible, if not actually under way. The goal of geo-economics is not to accumulate gold, as in mercantilism, for it is not kings in need of coin to pay their regiments who are the protagonists, but rather corporate executives and their bureaucratic allies. Their aim is not territorial security or territorial expansion but its geo-economic equivalent: the conquest of the more desirable roles in the world economy.

Thus geo-economics is the very appropriate expression of meritocratic ambitions projected onto the world scene, just as geopolitics once expressed quintessentially aristocratic ambitions. Transplants do replace some of the jobs lost to imports, but what jobs? Are they the jobs that we would want for our children?

None of this is to say that Japanese corporate expansionism, or foreign interests in general, are responsible for the woes of the American economy. Decades of unilateral market access have undoubtedly weakened American businesses and contributed to their decapitalization. But it would obviously be foolish to blame foreigners for our own policies, and our own delusions. I do not recall any commandos from Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) descending on Washington to impose unreciprocated Japanese access to American markets and American technology. Nor can Toyota or Hyundai be blamed if the U.S. government simply fails to insist on reciprocity, trusting instead in the gentle conduct of interminable negotiations that yield insignificant results.

Certainly neither our European competitors nor the Japanese can be blamed for the long list of self-inflicted wounds that have been engendering the third-worldization of America.

They did not arrange the regulatory and business-culture changes that brought the mores and urgencies of Las Vegas to Wall Street and corporate boardrooms across the land, to subordinate both future growth and current employment to immediate payoffs for well-placed principals.

They had no say in the most original invention of American statecraft: representation without taxation to extract "entitlements" galore, so that savings, already scant, have been absorbed in Treasury paper, instead of modern factories or updated infrastructure.

They did not seize control of our classrooms, to discredit the discipline and absolute standards that are the prerequisites of all education, nor lately appoint the "multiculturalism" inspectors who equate arithmetic with racism, and who annex the study of history to group therapy.

Nor did foreigners devise our spectacularly anti-social "social" programs, by now most nefariously entangled in both racial politics and the crudest racism. There are very few Afro-Swedes, yet because Sweden is very generous to unmarried mothers, such mothers account for 50.9 percent of all births, as opposed to 25.7 percent in the less generous United States, and only 1 percent in notably ungenerous Japan, where 99 percent of all children are still compelled to grow up with both fathers and mothers. That, no doubt, is yet another of those exotic Japanese practices devised by the sinister MITI—certainly nothing enhances a country's competitive position more than a population properly brought up in stable families.

The list is by no means complete. The many new perversions of the administration of justice could add an entire list of their own, from ruinous product-liability awards against the manufacturers of 50-year-old machinery for one-year-old accidents, to the abandonment of the loitering laws, which leaves policemen powerless against urban predators. But even the few dysfunctions listed above would have been sufficient to propel our rapid slide into third-world conditions, complete with an entire generation of children as doomed as the street waifs of Rio de Janeiro. The newborn son of a long-gone teenage father and a

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fifteen-year-old mother, with a grandmother in her thirties and a great-grandmother in her forties—all of them unmarried, uneducated, and unemployed—has become a rather common American type, destined from birth to roam the streets in between episodes of casual labor, crime, addiction, and imprisonment.

A search for the deeper sources of all the blatantly obvious diseases of American society would take us very far—though it might be said in passing that Anglo-Saxon style individualism could only be successful so long as there was still enough Calvinism to go around. But at least the immediate causes of our third-worldization are simply economic, a matter of capital and labor. And while the inadequate diligence of our labor force obviously has no simple cause, the immediate reason for our disastrous shortage of capital is plain enough. Americans have little to invest because they save so little.[7]

Obviously, it is possible to invest without saving, if others lend the necessary money. And of course the United States has borrowed hugely in recent years, and also absorbed a vast amount of foreign investment.[8] Yet given the size of the American economy, even the huge inflow of money from abroad could not possibly remedy the disastrous difference between our rate of savings and those of our competitors.[9]

In any case, the relentless erosion of the entire economic base of American society is revealed by undisputed statistics that have none of the flaws of international comparisons. During the last 20 years—half a working lifetime—American "non-farm, non-supervisory" employees actually earned slightly less, year by year. As a matter of fact, by 1990 their real earnings (corrected for inflation) had regressed to the 1965 level.[10] Will they regress further—perhaps to the 1960 level by 1995, and then to the 1955 level by the year 2000? It seems distinctly possible. Given the lack of invested capital, it is only with ever-cheaper labor that we can compete internationally. Therein lies our own path to Bangladesh.

Who are these poor unfortunates whose real earnings have been declining since 1965? Are they perhaps some small and peculiar minority? Not so. In November 1990, the last month for which those statistics are complete, they numbered 74,888,000, or just over 81 percent of all non-farm employees—that is, more than eight out of ten of all Americans who are not self-employed, from corporate executives earning hundreds or even thousands of dollars per hour, to those working at the minimum wage.

Far from being a minority whose fate cannot affect the base of American society, then, they *are* the base of American society, the vast majority of the labor force of manufacturing, mining, construction, transport, utility, wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance, real estate, all other service enterprises, and government employees.

How can the entire structure of American affluence and advancement from luxurious living to scientific laboratories *not* decline when the vast majority of all working Americans are earning less and less? And how can the U.S. not slide toward third-world conditions if this absolute decline continues while in both Western Europe and East Asia real earnings continue to increase?

Inevitably, the most telling comparison is with Japan. In 1970, Japanese manufacturing employees earned only just over a quarter (or more precisely 27 percent) as much as their American counterparts. In 1988, they earned 7 percent more. If the trend were to continue straight on both sides, in 18 more years American earnings would be reduced to less than a quarter (23 percent) of the Japanese level, almost the same proportion as now obtains between Brazilian and American hourly wages in manufacturing.

It stands to reason that by then the United States would become Japan's Brazil, an amusing, sometimes unsettling country of vast expanses with a cheerful but impoverished third-world population. The casual banter that nowadays greets errors of blatant incompetence in American offices, factories, and shops; the patient silence evoked even by acts of willful negligence and aggressive apathy; the learned ability to ignore unkempt urban vagrants and all their importunings; and generally our increasing acceptance of breakdowns, delays, and all forms of physical decay—all this shows that we are indeed adapting to our fate, by acquiring the necessary third-world traits of fatalistic detachment. But they, of course, ensure that the slide will continue.

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[7] From 1970 to 1989, total U.S. savings fluctuated between 12.1 percent and 14.1 percent of the gross domestic product, as opposed to 22.9 percent and 22.7 percent for the European Community average, and 38.9 percent and 34.9 percent for Japan.

[8] As late as 1982, our net international investments, holdings, and claims amounted to $136.7 billion, but by the end of 1989 (it is worse now), our net position was *minus* $663.7 billion, very much more than the combined debt of Brazil, Korea, Mexico, Indonesia, Algeria, Turkey, Portugal, Argentina, India, Malaysia, Greece, and China—most of them countries still poor but developing quite rapidly, for which foreign borrowing is perfectly appropriate, and the entry of foreign investment a clear mark of progress.

[9] In 1989, the numbers stood at $7,000 per person for Japan; $3,190 per person for the European Community (by then depressed by the admission of Greece, Portugal, and Spain); and $3,000 per person for the U.S. That miserable number is readily explained by the increase in personal consumption, from $8,650 in 1970 to $12,760 in 1989 (in constant 1987 dollars), as compared to $11,800 for Japan, and $8,830 for the European Community average in 1989.

[10] Average hourly earnings in constant 1982 dollars were $8.03 in 1970, $7.78 in 1980, and $7.53 in 1990. Averages conceal many tales, of course, from the rising earnings of federal, state, and municipal employees no matter what, to the degradation of $18-per-hour industrial workers into $10-per-hour janitors, or even their desperate poaching of minimum-wage jobs, once the stepping stones of underclass achievement.

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Robert L. Bartley: To the ordinary, everyday senses of mankind, America has not declined, it has prevailed. Its foe of two generations has collapsed and now even seeks to adopt American institutions of democracy and market economics.

Though to people who use their eyes and ears it is obvious that American influence in the world is on the rise, we have not been able to put the notion of decline behind us. For a segment of American opinion refuses to use its eyes and ears. Instead, proponents of decline confuse themselves with statistics they do not understand, or in some cases willingly distort. They invoke jingoism by turning international trade into some kind of combat, instead of a series of mutually beneficial arrangements among consenting adults.

The notion of decline has recently been a fad of the Left, in alliance with a coterie of non-ideological special interests. It is instructive to remember, though, that as the 1980's opened decline was a theme of the Right. Conservatives, notably but far from solely Jean-François Revel, warned that the West was falling behind in the military competition with the Soviet Sparta. It found itself manipulated by Soviet campaigns like the one that stopped the neutron bomb. The United States, the natural leader of the alliance, was wracked by inflation and stagnant productivity at home, preoccupied with hostages held by a primitive cleric, and unable even to fly six helicopters across the desert.

In those days, conservatives worried that the West lacked the will to use its superior economic resources even to defend itself. They can take heart that their warnings were heeded, that free peoples found the will to resist, that fear of Communist arms did not stunt them into self-doubt and inaction. But American will is now being tested in a more subtle way by the theme of decline, another recipe for confusion and self-destruction. If America generally falls prey to this delusion, it may throw away its birthright as the hub of a new and progressive world civilization.

On the Right, the notion of decline faded as Ronald Reagan filled the military spare-parts bins, frankly labeled the Soviet Union an "evil empire," invaded Grenada, bombed Libya, and revived the option of missile defense. The diplomatic turning point was 1983, when the West withstood a determined Soviet campaign, including street demonstrations and the suspension of arms negotiations, to stop the deployment of Pershing missiles in Europe. At the same time, the United States was curbing its inflation with Paul Volcker's monetary policy and reviving economic growth with Ronald Reagan's tax cuts. Seven years of uninterrupted economic expansion did wonders for military preparedness, diplomatic creativity, and public morale. The economic revival that started in the United States and quickly spread to Europe proved the final undoing of the totalitarian challenge.

The containment policy the West had patiently pursued for two generations predicted that under steady pressure the Soviet empire would mellow or crack. Then it happened at a stroke. In 1989 the Berlin Wall was breached, and by 1991 the Communist remnants proved themselves inept even at coup-making. Meanwhile, an American-led attack decimated the world's fourth-largest army in six weeks of combat and at the cost of 148 Americans lost in action. The world's new military balance was clear, leaving only the mysteries of why President Bush stopped short of Baghdad and how the hysterical Cassandras who had predicted a desert debacle managed to retain their *bona fides* as military experts.

Nor is American predominance merely or even primarily a matter of military power. American ideals of democratic pluralism and market economics were spreading not only in the former Soviet Union but throughout South America, Eastern Europe, and even Africa. America remains the favored destination of the world's refugees and immigrants. Its university system (despite the political-correctness plague) is unparalleled: it graduates many foreign nationals in science and engineering, of course, but many of them choose to stay in the U.S. For all the accomplishments of the industrious Japanese, America still dominates scientific innovation. Many transnational corporations, even if based in Germany or Switzerland, locate their research divisions in New Jersey or North Carolina. Japanese auto companies open design labs in Los Angeles. Above all, the U.S. utterly dominates the single capstone technology of our era, which in every language is called "software."

WHATEVER the momentary economic ups and downs, too, the plain fact is that the United States is the wealthiest society in the history of mankind. Or at least this is plain to the economically literate, who understand that no meaningful comparison can be based on momentary exchange rates among different national currencies. In translating among currencies to make international comparisons, the only meaningful basis is purchasing-power parity (PPP), the exchange rate at which two currencies would each buy the same basket of goods. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development spends endless hours of tedious calculation to churn out PPP rates precisely for the purpose of facilitating such comparisons.

Under the current regime of floating exchange rates, currencies can vary widely from their purchasing-power parity. This distorts comparisons and above all trends—for temporary and reversible variations in exchange rates are likely to swamp any changes in underlying fundamentals. As recently as 1985, the dollar was well over its

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PPP rate, exaggerating the American standard of living. In later years, the dollar has been below PPP, making America look less wealthy than it actually is.

So current comparisons built on current exchange rates show America falling behind, but properly adjusting the comparisons to PPP makes the picture entirely different. *The Economist Book of Vital World Statistics*, for example, found that at 1988 figures and exchange rates, the United States ranked only ninth in the world in gross domestic product per capita—behind Switzerland, Japan, and the Scandinavian countries. But it also reported that at PPP exchange rates, the American standard of living was far above other advanced nations. With the U.S. at 100, Canada rated 92.5 and Switzerland 87.0. Then came the Scandinavian nations and some small countries, including Kuwait. West Germany rated tenth at 78.6, and Japan twelfth at 71.5. Other developed nations trailed.

In short, the American standard of living is substantially above that of Japan and most of Europe.

This is confirmed by physical measures. American automobile ownership, for example, is one car for every 1.8 persons. Iceland has two people for each car, while Canada, New Zealand, and West Germany have 2.2. France has 2.5, the United Kingdom 2.8, and Japan 4.2. Similarly, there are 1.2 Americans per television set, compared to 1.7 Japanese and 2.4 Germans. The United States is also one of the world's great undeveloped countries, with 26.3 persons per square mile, compared to 102.1 in France, 233.8 in the United Kingdom, 246.1 in West Germany, 324.5 in Japan, and 395.8 in the Netherlands. While I have no figures handy, the American standard of living is most evident of all in housing; the Japanese measure apartment sizes in tatami mats.

As for the recent trends, the American economy led the world out of the economic crisis of the late 1970's by staging so remarkable a boom between 1983 and 1990 that it is now hard to remember such bywords as "stagflation" or "malaise" or "Euro-pessimism." In this expansion, the U.S. economy grew by 31 percent after adjustment for inflation, about equivalent to building 1982 West Germany from scratch. Real disposable income per capita rose by 18 percent. Productivity resumed growth after stagnating in the 1970's, and in fact surged in manufacturing. Manufacturing output grew faster than GNP, and exports leapt by more than 92 percent. More than eighteen million new jobs were created, even while the *Fortune* 500 companies pared their payrolls. Tax revenues kept pace with GNP growth and, since this was supposedly a decade of greed, it should be noted that charitable giving grew at 5.1 percent a year, compared with 3.5 percent a year over the previous 25 years.

Again, a remarkable leap in living standards is confirmed by physical measures. In 1980, hard as it may be to remember, only 1 percent of American households owned a videocassette recorder. By 1989, the figure was more than 58 percent. For all practical purposes, every video rental shop in the nation was started during the seven fat years. In 1980, cable-television systems reached 15 percent of American households, mostly in remote areas with difficult reception. At the end of the decade, half of all homes were wired. In 1981, when the Apple II was a hackers' toy, a little over two million personal computers were in use in the whole country. That year, IBM introduced its first PC, and Apple followed with the Macintosh in 1984. By 1988, the two million PC's had exploded to 45 million. Of this number, roughly half were in homes.

The most remarkable feature of the 1980's, though, was economic globalization. The 24-hour trading markets were stitched together; dollars circled the world at electronic speed. Rock-and-roll invaded Prague and Moscow, and Japanese auto companies built plants in Tennessee (Nissan), Ohio (Honda), and Kentucky (Toyota). "Interdependence" became the new byword, though one inadequate to describe the evolution of the world economy into an organic whole.

As the U.S. economy led the world out of the doldrums of 1982, the world voted with its money. In 1979, foreigners invested $38.7 billion in the United States; in 1980 this number was $58.1 billion. But investment inflows soared to $83.0 billion in 1981, $93.7 billion in 1982, $130.0 billion in 1985, and $229.8 billion in 1987. With the Volcker monetary policy and the Reagan tax cuts, America was where the world's investors saw the most promising return. And demand in America created the export markets that led Europe out of its pessimism.

A great source of the confusion about the American economy, and a great source of the current poor-mouthing, is that the United States has still not come to terms with its integration into the world economy. Thus America's sages gazed on the developments sketched above and decided the sky was falling. In sending their money here, those perfidious foreigners expected to get paid back. Indeed, the whole reason they were sending their money here was that they anticipated a higher return here than they could get at home. Their eagerness to invest in America instead of at home was turning us into—shame!—a debtor nation. And, of course, the American purchases that stimulated the European revival were reflected in—horrors!—a trade deficit.

In 1976 an official U.S. government advisory committee studying the international statistics suggested that

> the words "surplus" and "deficit" be avoided

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> insofar as possible. . . . These words are frequently taken to mean that the developments are "good" or "bad" respectively. Since that interpretation is often incorrect, the terms may be widely misunderstood and used in lieu of analysis.

Following the committee's recommendations, the Commerce Department stopped publishing most of what had up to then been a plethora of different "balances"—the current accounts balance, the basic balance, the net liquidity balance, the official settlements balance. Because the bureaucrats thought they had to publish something, they kept the merchandise trade balance, which has been used in lieu of analysis ever since.

What the advisory committee understood, and what cannot be emphasized too much, is that international statistics are an accounting identity; they will balance tautologically, by definition. After all, for every buyer there has to be a seller. The various trade balances are only different stopping places in a great circle of transactions. Except for zero, there is no bottom line.

The most constructive way to look at the international accounts is to divide them into three parts, which must by definition net out at zero. The two big halves are, first, trade in goods and services, and, second, investment. These are essentially two sides of the same coin; normally a trade deficit is financed by an investment surplus, or inflow. And a trade surplus will accompany investment outflows. The third part of the international accounts is called "official financing"; if trade and investment do not offset each other, the central banks have to step in and act as balance wheel—this can represent a problem if, as happened with U.S. accounts in the mid 1970's, there are simultaneous outflows of trade and investment.

In the normal investment-trade seesaw, though, a zero trade balance is not normal or even desirable. The U.S. ran a trade deficit for nearly all of its first 100 years, and generated trade surpluses under the Smoot-Hawley Tariff in the midst of the Great Depression. Normally, a rapidly growing economy will demand more of the world's supply of real resources and run a trade deficit. It will also provide attractive investment opportunities and attract capital inflows. In a healthy world, the two will offset each other, for periods of perhaps a century.

Yet somehow we have come to measure our nationhood by the one statistic of the trade balance. The real mystery is why we even collect it; if we kept similar statistics for Manhattan island, Park Avenue would lie awake at night worrying about its trade deficit. We have even come to view trade as some kind of nationalistic competition. Winning, apparently, is selling more to the rest of the world than we buy from it. Leaving aside the fact that this is ultimately impossible, why? If we could do it, what would we do with the proceeds, bury them in Fort Knox?

In the midst of this burgeoning prosperity and creativity, the Left decided that America was declining, and undertook to prove it by peering into the international statistics. While there were earlier precursors, the theme came to its fruition with Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. In 1988, as voters were rewarding a platform of "read my lips" and Willie Horton, book-buyers were handsomely rewarding Professor Kennedy's thesis of "imperial overstretch." In this view, the filling of the spare-parts bins and the reassertion of American military power abroad was not the cure for decline, it was the cause of decline. Indeed, it was decline itself.

Though it topped the lists for 24 weeks, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* was no doubt an example of the contemporary phenomenon of the unread best-seller. Few could have been interested in Kennedy's account of the Hapsburgs or Ming China, and he did not get to the predicament of the United States until pages 514-35. But on op-ed pages and in seminar rooms these pages triggered a national debate. It very much centered on the economy. Excessive military spending undermined the economy, the critique went, and the slackening economy could not support the military commitments. To be sure, the U.S. was still only in "relative decline," still first in importance, but its lead was shrinking. For

> the only way the United States can pay its way in the world is by importing ever-larger sums of capital, which has transformed it from being the world's largest creditor to the world's largest debtor nation *in the space of a few years.*

The Left naturally found great appeal in this double-barreled critique of the Reagan administration: the evident economic prosperity was marred by hidden flaws, and the root of the flaws lay in the military build-up. As for public opinion, in February 1989, a CBS/New York *Times* poll found that 48 percent of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the assertion that the U.S. was in decline as a world power. By March 1991, after the Gulf War, this figure plunged to 22 percent. (At that point Kennedy wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that this was just what one would expect from a declining power.)

The liberal declinists, however, did find some allies on the presumed Right—most prominently, the heads of transnational corporations headquartered in the United States, like Chrysler and Motorola, who found that they could not keep up with Toyota and Sony, transnational corporations headquartered in Japan. They were understandably eager to blame their predicament on anything but their own shortcomings. They and their labor-union allies belabored the trade-deficit and debtor-nation themes in their campaign to erect protectionist walls athwart history's march to an integrated world economy.

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Then, too, there was a species of financial conservative who found debt worse than taxes. Bond traders and central bankers have a natural tendency to focus on the supply of and demand for credit (to whatever extent they can be measured). And though growing corporations add debt every year as a matter of course, the executives running them were taught in their childhood to judge government finance solely by whether current income matches current outgo. And finally, there is a jingoistic conservatism casting about for a new foe to fight after the decline of Communism; it has settled on the Japanese trading companies.

Given these various roots of support, it is perhaps not surprising that the notion of decline proved so resilient in the face of both self-evident prosperity and intellectual refutation. I thought the matter had been laid to rest in the *Wall Street Journal* by May 1988, when Charles Wolf of the RAND Corporation took his usual beady aim. Yes, said Wolf, the U.S. share of world product had declined from 45 percent in 1950, "a manifestly atypical year." But against the mid-1960's or 1938, the U.S. share remained at 22 percent to 24 percent. "Japan's central-government debt is a larger fraction of its GNP than is that of the U.S., while the foreign indebtedness of the U.S. has been grossly overestimated in the official statistics." Somehow statist politics and economics had spread internationally in the 1960's and 1970's, while market economics and democracy had advanced in the 1980's. "The rhetoric of decline is wrong because it portrays a past that wasn't, a present that isn't, and a future that probably won't be."

There followed similar refutations from assorted centrist scholars. The economist Francis Bator of Harvard wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, for example: "The air is full of warnings against overestimating America's economic strength. The more likely error, I think, is the opposite." And Samuel Huntington and Joseph S. Nye, both also of Harvard, set out to make the case for maintaining American leadership.

My *Wall Street Journal* colleague, Karen Elliot House, who spent months interviewing hundreds of leaders around the world, found that *they* did not think America was threatened by decline. Jean-François Poncet, a former Foreign Minister of France, told her: "It's hard to take seriously that a nation has deep problems if they can be fixed with a 50-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax." Seizaburo Sato, a sometime adviser to the Japanese prime minister, recalled Henry Luce. "The 20th century was the American century," he said, "and the 21st century will be the American century."

At least it ought to be, because far from sinking into decline, America is now at the center of one of the great, exciting moments in mankind's economic history. A second industrial revolution is remaking world society. Not since the industrial revolution itself has technological advance been so breathtaking, or more pregnant with changes in the way mankind lives and thinks of itself.

More breathtaking now, probably, than even then. James Watt's steam engine pales beside what our generation has already seen: the splitting of the atom, the decoding of the gene, and the invention of the transistor and the computers it spawned. These are not only magnificent leaps of the technological imagination, they are potential precursors of currently unimaginable economic advance. Atomic power, unless cold fusion turns out to be real after all, has perhaps not realized what we once thought of as its potential. The first fruits of biotechnology are just now entering the markets. But already the transistor and the rest are changing the world.

Indeed, we live every day with the electronic revolution. As the first industrial revolution changed an agricultural economy into an industrial economy, a second industrial revolution is changing an industrial economy into a service economy. More specifically, into an information economy, in which the predominant activity is collecting, processing, and communicating information. We are headed toward a world in which everyone on the globe is in instant communication with everyone else.

It is this web of instant communication that has stitched the world into increasing interdependence. In fact, throughout this century the world economy has been more interdependent than anyone realized: the Great Depression, for example, was preeminently a world event, and its origins lay in disturbances in the international economy. But with today's 24-hour financial markets and transnational corporations, economic interdependence is hard to miss.

The same web of instant communication is responsible for the political developments that have rocked our age. Orwell, in his *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, saw information technology as an instrument of Big Brother. We are now seeing clearly that it is quite the opposite. The onslaught of the information age played a key role in liberating Eastern Europe and in spreading democratic currents through the Soviet Union and the developing world. The totalitarians have found they cannot control a people in touch with the outside. In Albert Wohlstetter's phrase, *the fax shall make you free.* Big Brother can of course build a society without computers, but that society will not be able to compete in the modern world, as China seems to be learning after Tiananmen Square.

The precision weapons demonstrated with such effect in the Gulf War are also an aspect of information technology. They promise to make combat once again the province of professional warrior against professional warrior; no longer need philosophers talk about "mutual assured destruction"—the targeting of women and chil-

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dren with nuclear missiles. Once we fully understand this, it will redound to the benefit of civilians everywhere.

Naturally our time and our nation have their problems. Americans should take education more seriously, instead of subordinating it to goals like racial balance and asbestos removal. Our legal system should let police enforce the law against vagrants, and should stop inflicting a parasitic tort-bar industry upon us. Our political system is so frozen it seems unable to address these everyday problems.

More broadly, there is such a thing as being too liberated, having too many options. We are still learning to live with our new freedoms. The onslaught of modernity has not been good for institutions such as the family. We are overly susceptible to fads—health scares, for example—and for that matter the fad of declinism.

For all these problems, what mostly needs to be explained is not what is wrong with America, but how so much of our articulate elite can so completely mistake reality. A great part of the answer is that progress is unsettling, as rapid change always is. Looking back over history, indeed, we see that ages of economic advance have often been ages of pessimism.

In particular, history's all-time champion economic pessimist, Thomas Malthus, published his first essay on population in 1798; this was 29 years after James Watt's first patent in connection with the steam engine. The first industrial revolution, in other words, was the venue for Malthus's gloomy theorizing. He was explaining why economic progress was impossible just as mankind was taking the greatest economic leap in history.

Not surprisingly, the Malthus paradox attracted the attention of Joseph A. Schumpeter, our century's greatest economic historian and one of its greatest economists. One chapter in his massive *History of Economic Analysis* relates how ancient societies were worried about overpopulation, but after about 1600 this changed completely. The prevailing attitude was that "increasing population was the most important symptom of wealth; it was the chief cause of wealth; it was wealth itself."

"It is quite a problem to explain why the opposite attitude," Schumpeter wrote, "should have asserted itself among economists from the middle of the 18th century on. Why was it that economists took fright at a scarecrow?" Malthusian pessimism did not develop despite the progress of the industrial revolution, Schumpeter concluded. It developed because of the progress.

Long-run progress, Schumpeter pointed out, causes short-run problems, and

> in the industrial revolution of the last decades of the 18th century, these short-run vicissitudes grew more serious than they had been before, precisely because the pace of economic development quickened.

This is not to say that the short-run problems were imaginary. In the short run, technological advance destroyed agricultural jobs faster than it created manufacturing jobs, especially since guilds and the like created bottlenecks. A type of mass unemployment arose that had been unknown in the Middle Ages, and with it urban slums, gin mills, and great social debates over the Poor Laws. Malthus's pessimism was echoed a few decades later by Dickens. But we now know that during the lives of both men mankind was rapidly building wealth.

If, then, we are currently experiencing a second industrial revolution, it is not surprising to hear such Malthusian themes as overpopulation and the exhaustion of resources echoing through our public discourse. From the primitive technology of a wooden sailing ship, the earth's forces look overwhelming. Now that we have the technological prowess to put men on the moon, the earth looks like a fragile flower, puny beside our own powers.

The rapid change of the second industrial revolution, moreover, upsets established institutions and established elites. As instant information and instant markets erode the power of governments, so too they erode the power of corporate chieftains and labor bosses. We can now all watch the poor chairman of Exxon writhing over an oil spill in Alaska. Many chief executives find themselves displaced, albeit with golden parachutes: half of *Fortune*'s top 500 corporations in 1980 were gone from the list in 1990. Under the force of industrial competition and information on wages and working conditions, labor unions find their private-sector membership declining.

So too with intellectual elites, who find their skills fading in relevance and their positions endangered. Perhaps political correctness in the academy is best seen as a brand of Luddism. And surely much of our articulate class feels threatened in a deeply personal way by the notion that a historic corner was turned under a simple-minded movie actor.

This mixture of neurosis, special pleading, ideological hostility, ignorance, and confusion is obviously a phenomenon to be reckoned with. Indeed, even an unbridled optimist has to admit that there is after all one way America actually could decline. To wit, if this neurotic pessimism becomes a self-realizing prophecy.

This would a historic tragedy, for the confluence of the second industrial revolution and the collapse of totalitarianism presents the human race with an unparalleled opportunity. The decade of the 1990's is not a time for pessimism, but a time for large thoughts and large ambitions. The tide in the affairs of men is running, and we must take the current when it serves. The brightest hope for mankind today is that the breaching of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 marked the end of a beastly era that

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started with the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914.

The consciousness of everyone alive today was forged in an abnormal era, a century of world war, revolution, and totalitarianism. While mankind has always suffered wars and other miseries, our century ranks with the most wretched in history. Technology turned battle from a contest of knights into an assault on whole civilian populations. A Great Depression sank the world economy. With the rise of Hitler and Stalin, the human soul was under siege. World War II dissolved into a worldwide confrontation between the West and Communism.

At issue was the nature of man—a cog in the great dialectical machine of history, or an autonomous individual capable of free will and self-government? If reform succeeds in Russia, or even survives, all this will be history. We will have a new era to define.

The skyline of Paris is dominated by the great monument to an earlier and less gruesome era. The Eiffel Tower was erected for the Paris Exposition of 1889 to celebrate the scientific and engineering prowess of *La Belle Epoque. La Belle Epoque,* of course, is typically associated with *fin de siècle* Paris, the Paris of Toulouse-Lautrec. It was an age of an extraordinary flowering of the arts, when Manet, Degas, and Monet fought the battles that led to the *Salon des Refusés.* It was also an age of extraordinary science, with the likes of Louis Pasteur and Madame Curie. Most of all, it was an age of faith in human progress. Even the dour Emile Zola invoked "a century of science and democracy."

The hub of this civilization was Great Britain. With the Corn Laws it practiced free trade *unilaterally,* to the benefit of its own consumers and the advancement of underdeveloped nations. With the Royal Navy it protected freedom of the seas (and suppressed the slave trade). With the pound sterling, it was the anchor of an exceptionally efficient international monetary mechanism known as the gold standard. Goods, labor, and capital moved freely to their most productive uses throughout an integrated economy spanning two continents and more.

The biggest beneficiary of this system was the United States of America. Open immigration peopled its lands. Open markets in Europe took its grain, at the expense of agricultural interests in Europe and especially England. Despite these sales, its hunger for capital goods was such that it ran trade deficits year after year, but this mattered little because of consistent investment inflows. For, most important of all, the London financial markets mobilized the capital of the civilization as a whole for the prodigious and exciting task of developing the North American continent.

Today we are in a position to build a new version of the institutions of the *Belle Epoque* and rekindle its spirit. We can hope, too, to avoid another Sarajevo, for the technology of the second industrial revolution is less threatening than that of the first. The Eiffel Tower was the product of a master engineer, in its way a monument to central planning. The smelting of steel and the building of railroads were enterprises that demanded central planning and the mobilization of massive capital. Napoleon had demonstrated how to conscript whole societies for war, and in the ensuing century the experience of mankind taught it efficient logistics and bureaucratic order. The very advance of science led philosophers like Marx to think of "laws of history." In 1914 this technology, combined of course with the recurrent follies of mankind, marched the world into war.

Ever since, we have been struggling to tame the impact of technology and the mindset it engenders. As the assembly line turned men into interchangeable cogs, the centralized, bureaucratic state became a breeding ground of totalitarianism. But the technology of the second industrial revolution empowers the governed rather than the governors. In its constant churning today's technology has a dark side to be conquered, but its bright side offers the hope of a liberating era.

Certainly technology is not everything. Its opportunities must be exploited by the human spirit. Our dilemma is that all of us living in the 1990's have been taught from the cradle not to believe in dreams. We are cynical about politicians, and they live down to our expectations. Instead of a century of science and democracy we have Andy Warhol proclaiming that everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes. Instead of Toulouse-Lautrec we have Robert Mapplethorpe.

And instead of the promise of world cooperation led by the United States, we have the gloomy apostles of decline, alarmed because goods and capital move across lines someone drew on maps, trying to manufacture conflict out of the peaceful and mutually beneficial intercourse among peoples.

The last time the will of the West was tested, it rose to the challenge. In particular, the American electorate understood that the threat was Soviet Communism, not the military-industrial complex. With the more subtle test of a litany of decline coming out of Cambridge, Detroit, and Washington, there will again be confusion and apparent close calls, but in the end the delusion will not sell. Indeed, given any sort of intellectual and political leadership to frame the challenge, the American nation will rise to the rich opportunity before it.

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Russia's Chance

Richard Pipes

When in 1917 the Russian empire exploded in revolution, the writer V.V. Rozanov observed with astonishment that his country had "wilted in two days. At the very most three. . . . It is amazing how she suddenly fell apart, all of her, down to particles, to pieces. . . . And what remained? Strange to say, nothing. A base people remained."

A similar disintegration has occurred in our day. It had happened earlier still, at the end of the 16th century, when the reigning Rurik dynasty died without issue and Russia plunged into the Time of Troubles. Now, for the third time in Russian history, the breakdown of state authority has brought about the dissolution of society.

This is a remarkable phenomenon. Revolutions normally result in the replacement of one government by another; in Russia, and there only, do they cause a collapse of organized life. To explain this peculiarity of its history, one must say a few words about Russia's political system—a system which has shown a remarkable ability to survive changes in the forms of government and in official ideology.

As it evolved since the 14th century, the Russian state was distinguished less by absolutism—common to much of early modern Europe—than by a distinctive type of unlimited authority that combined sovereignty with ownership. Under the "patrimonial" regime, the state molded society and gave it its sense of identity. A country ruled in this manner held together only as long as government was firm and decisive; the instant it weakened, society fell apart. This is what happened during the Time of Troubles, then in 1917 after the abdication of Nicholas II, and again in 1990-91, following the dissolution of the Communist party, the true government of the "Soviet" state.

Western opinion has had difficulty grasping this fact because it viewed the Soviet Union as a state organized along familiar lines, with government and citizenry coexisting in a certain balance. To be sure, Russia was moving toward a regime of this sort in the final decades of czarism, but the process was disrupted by the Revolution. After October 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power, Russia was thrown back to the political practices of the 16th and 17th centuries. Whatever its theoretical claims and propagandistic slogans, the Communist regime in fact enforced in the most extreme form the principles of Muscovite "patrimonialism," depriving the citizenry of all rights, notably the right to form independent organizations and to own property. By shifting all political authority and property to the state, the Communist regime eliminated every semblance of an equilibrium between government and society.

When in the mid-1980's the Communist leadership decided to dilute its absolute authority and bring society into a limited partnership in order to help it overcome worrisome symptoms of political and economic stagnation, it found to its dismay that there was no society and hence no partner. There were only millions of atomized individuals—some alienated and angry, the majority indifferent—whom 70 years of Communism had taught to take care of themselves and leave public affairs to their betters.

Trained to respond to signals from above, Soviet citizens in no time sensed that central authority had weakened and could no longer enforce its commands. Fear, the main instrument of Communist control, weakened and then disappeared. Emboldened, they took advantage of the regime's predicament to compensate for 70 years of deprivation. Instead of rushing to the government's help, they proceeded to pay it back in kind, atomizing it as it had atomized them.

The result has been a gigantic implosion. Since 1985, the Communist state and the economy which it had claimed as its own have come under massive assault from a population whom it had robbed of any sense of shared interest. The population's objective is not so much to improve or replace existing institutions as to destroy them.

For this reason, the recent events cannot properly be called a "revolution." The word that best describes them is *duvan*, a term of Turkish origin used by the Cossacks to designate the division of spoils acquired in raids on Persian and Turk-

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ish settlements. The Soviet Union is being systematically "duvanized"—that is, taken apart and distributed among ex-Communist organizations, republican and local governments, state enterprises, crime gangs, and, last but not least, individual citizens. There is hardly any public authority or national economy left; the little that remains survives by inertia. This is why all plans of reform, political as well as economic, have come to naught. There simply is no mechanism to translate ideas into policies.

In the political realm, authority has either dissolved or become paralyzed. The central Soviet government had ceased functioning long before it was officially dissolved, and it is far from evident that the powers which it lost have devolved upon the republican governments that have taken its place. In the smaller republics—Georgia and Moldova, for instance—where the population fears Russian interference, nationalism supplies a certain measure of political cohesion. This also holds true of Ukraine. But in Russia, the largest republic by far, accounting for one-half of the population and 70 percent of the industrial production of what used to be the Soviet Union, the sense of national solidarity is still weakly developed: what there is of it finds outlets mainly in xenophobia. Time will tell whether the new president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, can translate his popularity into effective command. So far, the signs have not been encouraging: here more than in any of the successor states, the *duvan* is doing its destructive work.

The collapse of the political system has inevitably led to a breakdown of the national economy. To cover mounting deficits, the Russian government has been emitting banknotes at a pace determined only by the capacity of the printing presses. The ruble is losing value at a rate of 2 to 3 percent a week. As always under conditions of hyperinflation, people shun the national currency. Those who can, resort to dollars; those who cannot, hoard goods. To a large extent, the economy of the country is being reduced to barter transactions involving countless, statistically untraceable private exchanges of goods and services. The reversion to such primitive practices has had a fatal effect on industrial productivity, since managers can no longer count on the delivery of parts and raw materials. It has also adversely affected the distribution of foodstuffs, the producers of which refuse to sell for depreciating rubles, or if they do sell, demand dollar-equivalent ruble prices which place them out of the reach of most citizens.

Nearly 200 years ago, the historian Nicholas Karamzin said that if he were asked to answer in one word the question "What goes on in Russia?" he would have to respond: *kradut*—"thieving." This is truer today than ever. Communist officials dispose of the assets of the party, and, it is rumored, salt away the proceeds in foreign banks. Managers appropriate the output of their enterprises: those in the oil-producing Tiumen region, for example, are reported to have struck deals with Japan to trade oil for cars. Food produced by state farms is channeled to the private market. So is foreign aid.

We are thus witnessing a catastrophic—though in the case of Russia, not unprecedented—disintegration of political and economic cohesion. Totalitarianism is yielding to its antithesis, anarchy. Watching this development, one is reminded of the lament of Alexander Kerensky, head of the Provisional Government after the overthrow of the czar in 1917, who was in turn overthrown by the Bolsheviks:

> The word "revolution" is quite inapplicable to what happened in Russia [in February 1917]. A whole world of national and political relationships sank to the bottom, and at once all existing political and tactical programs, however bold and well conceived, appeared hanging aimlessly and uselessly in space.

IF RUSSIA were not a giant spread across two continents and equipped with tens of thousands of nuclear warheads, its destiny would be mainly material for intellectual speculation. But things being what they are, its fate has to be of abiding concern to the rest of the world. Even without its colonial dependencies, Russia has 150 million people inhabiting a vast territory that extends from the Baltic to the Pacific; its geopolitical position alone ensures it a major role in international politics.

Writing two years ago, I suggested that Gorbachev's Soviet Union faced two alternatives: "breakdown" or "crackdown."* These still appear to be the most likely options and they are not mutually exclusive: the breakdown is under way, the crackdown has been attempted and failed but it may recur. The least likely possibility is an orderly, gradual transition to democracy and the free market which Western governments hope for and have made a precondition of aid.

In the past, Russian Times of Troubles have been followed by a reimposition of authoritarian rule. Precedent suggests that the current turmoil may be similarly resolved. Such also is the expectation of the Russian intelligentsia. But the past is not an invariable guide. The trauma that Russia suffered under Communist rule was so devastating, and it so transformed the nation's psyche, that precedent may no longer hold.

There does exist in Russia a constituency eager for the return of a "firm hand." It is made up of the two extremes of the socioeconomic spectrum: the previously privileged elite, resentful of the loss of power and entitlements; and the poor, most affected by the collapse of the subsidized consumer economy.

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* COMMENTARY, March 1990.

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These two constitute a potentially dangerous bloc, but as the failed coup of August 1991 has shown, they do not command the allegiance of that broad and large middle class which has neither lost privileges nor suffered the most severe destitution. Opinion polls indicate that the majority of Russians pine for "normalcy," which they equate with political and economic Westernization. In China, the Old Guard has been able to beat down pro-Western forces because there 80 percent of the population are peasants who lead largely self-sufficient lives and have little interest in politics. In the Russian Republic, where three out of four inhabitants reside in cities, the level of political awareness is much higher and the prospects of an old-fashioned dictatorship extinguishing the liberated spirit of independence correspondingly dimmer.

One can, of course, envisage a more competent power grab than the absurd putsch of last August, especially if the food situation in the cities were to deteriorate still further. What one cannot envisage is a coalition of generals and ex-Communist officials—the only conceivable leaders of such a coup—governing Russia more effectively than they did in the past, when they were in charge and with their ineptitude brought the country to its current predicament. Russia can no longer be governed without cooperation between rulers and ruled and hence without some sort of an institutionalized equilibrium between state and society.

Another alternative to dictatorship, at least as likely and considerably more attractive, frightens those foreign statesmen who tend to assign the highest priority to stability. It is the continuing disintegration of the country's political and economic structures to the point where nothing remains of Communism's legacy.

One aspect of this process is virtually completed: the Soviet empire has been shattered. Any attempt to reconstruct it would require massive military intervention, but Moscow simply does not dispose of a force either sufficiently large or sufficiently reliable to carry out a campaign of colonial reconquest. Russian soldiers have demonstrated in the past their unwillingness to fight the insurgent nations of the Caucasus; compelling them to fight against republican national guards would probably result in a civil war which no dictatorship could survive.

The empire's break-up was inevitable in the sense that in the era of general decolonization, history could not have been expected to make an exception for the Russian empire. It was quixotic, therefore, for President Bush to lecture the Ukrainians on the advantages of freedom under Russian rule. It was also plainly absurd for an official of his administration—the administration of a country born of colonial revolution—to insist that Washington does not recognize unilateral declarations of independence.

One can appreciate the bureaucrats' nostalgia for the old days when deals could be struck with the Politburo and the central ministries binding on the whole country, when Moscow paid its debts on time, and Soviet nuclear weapons were in "reliable" hands. (As an unidentified Washington official confided to the New York *Times*, "There is real concern here about the consequences of the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union.") But those times are gone beyond hope of recall. The dissolution of the Communist party ensured the break-up of the empire, since the party was the cement that had kept it together. The quicker, therefore, that the West grants the new republics formal diplomatic recognition the better. The standard used should not be adherence to democratic principles. Desirable as that may be, it was not the condition for recognizing Stalin's Soviet Union or Mao's China. The criterion for recognition should be the traditional test of the government of a given country exercising effective authority over its territory.

There is not much chance that the Commonwealth put together in late 1991 will survive for any length of time. It is a makeshift arrangement whose creators had little idea of what they were doing. The only union still feasible is an economic association like the European Community, under which genuinely sovereign nations with complementary economies engage in multilateral trade. But for such an association to become reality, Moscow must give up, in thought and deed, all claim on the republics. This is proving difficult. The imperialist mentality remains rooted in the Russian psyche, even in democratic circles, for it is historically closely linked to the idea of Russian nationhood. Some of Yeltsin's remarks concerning the necessity of adjusting Russia's frontiers with Ukraine and Kazakhstan give grounds for anxiety, since any such "adjustments" would be wholly to Russia's advantage. Nor is the cause of a peaceful transition from empire to a free community of sovereign nations helped by signals from Washington that it prefers stable unity to unstable diversity.

Why is it desirable for Russia to keep on disintegrating until nothing remains of its institutional structures? Because this is the only way of ridding the country of its patrimonial mentality and the Communist cadres which embody it. This kind of radical surgery is a prerequisite for any genuine progress.

Although outlawed and formally divested of authority, the Communist apparatus is still very much alive. It owes its survival to the fact that under a regime which endowed it with a political monopoly, it alone had had the opportunity to acquire administrative skills. This is one reason why the democratic intelligentsia has not been able to replace it. But the old apparatus also manages to hold on because the intelligentsia, its

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main rival, can be stirred into action only when resisting. Like Russian society at large, the intelligentsia is defined by the state, which in its case means defiance of state authority rather than the assumption of governmental responsibility. One of the disappointments of recent years has been the inability or unwillingness of the intelligentsia to make the transition from individual dissidence to collective leadership. In this respect, 1991 distressingly resembles 1917.

Hence the anomaly of the present situation: Communism has been abolished and the country is committed to democracy, and yet the civil service remains largely and the military command exclusively in the hands of one-time Communists. The Russian countryside and the smaller cities are run by the same people who had been in charge under Brezhnev. It is an apparatus without a head but with all the other organs intact and functioning. These people no longer receive orders from the Central Committee of the party, but years of dressage have conditioned them to know instinctively what is expected of them. Like czarist and Soviet bureaucrats, these *apparatchiki* view society as an enemy; they despise democracy in all its manifestations; they hate and fear the West as the source of subversive ideas. From habit, they conform outwardly, but at the same time manage systematically to thwart public initiatives. This holds especially true of the KGB whose tentacles still penetrate everywhere.*

For Russia to move toward normalcy, this apparatus must be extirpated. Unreconciled to their demotion, bitter and vengeful, the old functionaries would be the first to jump on the bandwagon should Russia veer to the Right and once again take the road leading to dictatorship. Despite their support of the August putsch, they have not been fired. They are sticks of kindling wood, awaiting an arsonist willing to set the country aflame so as to emerge as its savior.**

RUSSIA now has a unique chance to build a state from the bottom up and in the process rid itself of the legacy of patrimonialism. Such reconstruction will necessarily be destabilizing, at any rate for a time. It is a risk worth taking since, as the fate of post-Ceausescu Romania has shown, "stabilization" of an unreformed Communist regime leads to the preservation *in situ* of the old ruling elite. Over the long run, the creation of a state based on a social consensus will enhance Russia's stability because it will preclude political crises from turning into social cataclysms.

For 700 years, Russia's political system has been structured vertically, with shafts of state authority sunk into society to serve as stabilizers. It was a mechanical contraption, awesome and seemingly indestructible when intact but worse than useless once the pillars supporting it rotted. The social fabric was all warp and no woof. The country's foremost need now is to create a network of lateral bonds linking individuals and groups with one another, independently of the state, thereby giving society the cohesion to balance the government and the ability to step in at times of severe political crisis. For this to happen in a country with Russia's traditions, people have to unlearn waiting for orders from above. They must be thrown onto their own devices and forced to organize in order to survive.

Creating a political regime that is organic in nature rather than mechanical will not be simple for many reasons, not the least of them being the mistrust which Communism, the easier to rule its subjects, deliberately sowed among them. Russians are unusually—abnormally—suspicious of one another and of anyone in authority. This mistrust, which has become an instinct, having been the surest guarantor of survival under Communism, must be overcome if a better political system is to emerge. It will require at least one generation, possibly more. It cannot be taught: confidence in fellow citizens, the basis of civil society, comes only from experience.

What has been said of politics applies also to economics. As the centralized national economy falls apart, a new one, of necessity, arises to take its place. Of necessity, since Russians are not about to lie down and perish of malnutrition and the cold because the government can no longer supply them with food and fuel. Already a primitive barter economy is emerging from the ruins of the socialist order, and alongside it, even certain more advanced forms of economic activity such as commodity exchanges.

If a free market is to become a reality, it is far more likely to grow from these seedlings than from the "regulated market" once envisioned by Gorbachev and the Communist reformers. For all the hardships it will cause while Russia and its one-time dependencies are in transition, the collapse of the central economy is, therefore, to be welcomed as a prerequisite to a more efficient system of production and distribution.

Russians, who tend to swing between extremes of boastfulness and humility, are at present in a self-deprecatory mood. They view themselves as a historic failure and desperately seek models abroad. They would like to be like the United States or, better yet, Sweden, which they admire for its ability to combine democracy, prosperity,

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* The KGB has recently been abolished. But as with many other structural changes announced by Moscow it is difficult to make out whether this one is real, since immediately a new institution has sprung up to take its place. Its formal name is AFB, the Russian acronym for Agency of Federal Security.

** This is not to suggest that all one-time Communist civil servants should be dismissed, since many of them possess irreplaceable skills. It is the network of Communist organizations, still very much intact, and the interlocking relationship between them and other state institutions, that need to be broken up.

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and social equality. But these foreign models are inapplicable to a country with the peculiar history and political traditions of Russia. This is a task that has to be worked out at home. The sooner Russians are compelled by circumstances to fend for themselves, the quicker will they develop a political and economic system suited to their own conditions and culture.

It may be objected that the only such system is autocracy. And indeed, it is undeniably true that throughout its history Russia has had autocratic regimes which sacrificed individual rights to collective security. Such regimes, however, were the product not of an innate incapacity for self-rule but rather of inadequately developed social and political institutions that made arbitrary authority the only alternative to something even worse, namely anarchy. Should such institutions be given a chance to mature—and this can happen only under conditions of moderate adversity—there is no reason Russians should not come up with a political and economic order more in tune with the requirements of modernity.

It follows from all this that there are no quick solutions to the Russian tragedy. The country must overcome the legacies of 75 years of Communism and of centuries of czarism, whose central institutions were autocracy and serfdom.

Foreign powers can play only a limited role in this process of healing. A sharp debate is under way in the West on the extent and nature of the economic assistance which the industrial democracies should render the successor states of the Soviet Union. One school of thought wants massive aid tied to far-reaching reforms and demilitarization. Another opposes such aid on the grounds that it would only delay reform, serving as a life-support system to a dying old regime. The arguments of the second group are more convincing. The conditions under which the United States extended Marshall Plan aid to Western Europe after World War II were fundamentally different from those prevailing today in countries extricating themselves from the devastations of Communism. Then Europe was physically ruined but it had the people with skills as well as the institutions needed to rebuild the economy. In Russia, by contrast, the physical plant is (relatively) intact, but the skills and institutions are missing. The injection of tons of hard currency would do no more than sustain the status quo.

Such considerations apart, the sheer magnitude of the task of rebuilding the Soviet economy with foreign capital renders it utopian. West Germany expects in the next three years to spend $250 billion in government funds to rehabilitate its eastern half. To this sum must be added hundreds of billions of private capital which will be invested there by West Germans. Now the former German Democratic Republic, with a population one-seventeenth that of the Soviet Union and one-eighth that of Russia, had the most advanced economy in the Communist bloc. To match this effort, Russia would require capital infusions amounting to trillions of dollars. Such sums are nowhere available.

There do exist, however, other, more modest forms of assistance. One is know-how, especially managerial skills, always the Achilles heel of Russian organizations, along with the techniques of running municipal government, the courts, banks. Secondly, emergency aid can be extended in the form of food and medicines to tide the country over the most difficult period ahead when the risks of social disorder due to shortages are the greatest. Herbert Hoover showed in 1921-22 how such aid could be delivered to Russia swiftly and efficiently.

But it is absurd for the West to make such assistance conditional on reforms which, under present conditions, no one can carry out. The aid should be given promptly, generously, and without strings to keep the amount of distress at a moderate level. Finally, it will certainly be necessary for the West to help Moscow reschedule its external debt, since a default would have very deleterious consequences for all countries concerned.

How eerily silent in the face of this catastrophe is the Sovietological community which for years has been assuring the world that the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc were solid and popular and, for all their obvious shortcomings, able to teach us a thing or two about social justice. What thoughts cross the minds of the "revisionist" historians who depicted Lenin as the leader of a genuine popular revolution and the father of the country, as they look at photographs showing his monuments razed by furious, truly revolutionary crowds and his severed head dangling from the wrecker's noose?

An analysis of the profession's failure to foresee anything that has happened deserves to be undertaken not only to shame it, but to learn from its mistakes. These had several causes. One was intellectual vanity. With the overwhelming majority of ordinary Americans hostile to Communism, the expert was inclined to take a contrarian view, to argue that reality was different or, at the very least, more "complex." For what would be the point of being an expert if one knew no more than the untutored masses?

To qualify as an expert one also had to travel to the Communist bloc, and this required the kind of access which totalitarian governments granted only foreigners whom it considered friendly. I heard not a few Sovietologists speak privately of the Soviet regime in terms of utmost contempt, but they never dared to do so in public. By their public silence they became accomplices in the Big Lie.

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But the failure of the profession was also and perhaps most of all due to a "social-scientese" methodology which ignored history, literature, witnesses' testimonies, and all else that could not be explained in sociological jargon and buttressed with statistics. Playing scientists, they developed "models" which assumed that all states and societies were fundamentally identical because they were called upon to perform identical functions. Being imponderable and hence unquantifiable, the peculiar features of national culture escaped their attention. So, too, did the moral dimension of human activity inasmuch as scientific inquiry was expected to be "value-free." Human suffering was an irrelevant factor.

The fate of the Sovietological profession, which constitutes only one regiment in the army of social "scientists," should serve as a warning. Science in our day enjoys well-deserved prestige, but its methods cannot be applied to human affairs. Unlike atoms and cells, human beings have values and goals which science is incapable of analyzing because they never stand still and never recur. They are, therefore, the proper province of the humanities, and best studied by the methods of history, literature, and the arts.

They are at sea now, the Soviet experts, confounded by irrefutable realities and abandoned by a regime whose claims to being progressive and democratic they once helped to bolster. They remind one of the 18th-century French adventurer, a contemporary of Dr. Johnson's, George Psalmanazar. Claiming to come from Formosa, he devised a Formosan alphabet and language, an accomplishment that earned him an invitation to Oxford. Psalmanazar also wrote historical and geographical descriptions of his alleged homeland. They became international best-sellers even though everything in them was invented. A group of young Oxford missionaries trained on his manuals traveled to Formosa only to discover that nothing they had been taught bore any relationship to reality. A good part of the "Sovietological" literature of the past 30 years has served us a Psalmanazarian Soviet Union: not totally invented, perhaps, but sufficiently deceptive to cause widespread disbelief once the true state of affairs was revealed.

And so, one fine day, the Communist regimes vanished in a puff of smoke. And what remained? A tormented people who the Sovietologists had not even noticed were there.

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The Jeffries Affair

Philip Gourevitch

ONE afternoon last August, the columnist Murray Kempton of *Newsday* stood on a street corner in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, discussing academic politics with a middle-aged black man. Kempton had come to the riot-torn neighborhood in a city van to witness an outdoor press conference called by Mayor David Dinkins. Afterward, he joined the feeding frenzy of reporters who mingled with neighborhood onlookers, seeking an authentic voice of "black rage" to explain the preceding days of anti-Jewish rioting. Wearing a light gray-flannel suit, smoking a pipe, taking notes with a fountain pen, Kempton would have cut a striking figure on that stretch of Eastern Parkway under any circumstances. When he held up his looseleaf notebook and displayed a sticker that read, "Don't Believe the Liberal Media," he looked as if he had stepped out of a *New Yorker* cartoon—especially as he is famously liberal (if in a somewhat heterodox sense) himself.

In any case, his interlocutor seemed to agree with the sticker. Circling around in front of Kempton, the slight man with graying dreadlocks and a tam-o'-shanter woven of the African nationalist colors of red, green, and gold, kept pointing at the journalist and proclaiming: "I've heard his story, now I want history, because my story is a mystery."

"That's right," another man said. "Let's talk about the curriculum of inclusion."

"You mean Leonard Jeffries?" Kempton asked.

"Yes sir," said a teenager. "Leonard Jeffries said everything that is correct."

"That's what this is all about," the dreadlocked man declared.

The statement was not without substance. What the man on the street corner meant was that the mayhem in Crown Heights—the four days in which blacks marched and rioted against their Jewish neighbors, leaving one slain, many injured, and the rest terrorized by chants of "The black Hitler has arose now"—was a sort of objective correlative to the struggle for multicultural curricular reform being waged in the academy by "Afrocentrists" like Leonard Jeffries, Jr. The chairman of black studies at the City College of New York (CCNY), Jeffries has dismissed all of Western civilization as a barbaric, white supremacist rip-off of and conspiracy against African peoples and culture.

For exactly two weeks before the riots broke out, Jeffries was featured in banner headlines in New York newspapers, not as an advocate of educational reform, but as a racist demagogue. The media uproar was occasioned by a speech, delivered on July 20, 1991 at the Empire State Black Arts and Cultural Festival in Albany, in which Jeffries blamed Jewish conspiracies for everything from the slave trade to the negative depiction of blacks in Hollywood movies to setbacks he himself had suffered in his efforts to impose an Afrocentrist social-studies curriculum on New York state's grade-school students. The two-hour speech included nasty anti-Semitic swipes at Diane Ravitch, formerly of Teachers College and now an Assistant Secretary of Education, the sociologist Nathan Glazer of Harvard, former New York City Mayor Edward Koch, and even the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. of the City University of New York, whom Jeffries seems to take for a Jew.

Jeffries framed his speech as a defense of a commission appointed by Thomas Sobol, the state Commissioner of Education, to rewrite the New York public-school social-studies curriculum.* He spoke at a time when there was still heated public controversy over the report issued by that commission. Entitled "One Nation, Many Peoples: A Declaration of Cultural Independence," the report called for a revision of social-studies syllabi along lines so radically multicultural that Schlesinger, another member of the commission, refused to endorse it, stating that it was "saturated with *pluribus* and neglectful of *unum*." Jeffries thought quite the opposite. He had been a consultant to an earlier Sobol commission, and had contributed to a report too militant to be adopted. But his beef in Albany was largely a personal one. He painted himself as a man vilified by a widespread conspiracy to maintain a white-supremacist curriculum. He compared himself to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. as

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* See "E Pluribus Nihil," by Midge Decter, COMMENTARY, September 1991.

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a likely target of white assassins—never mind that Malcolm X was slain by fellow black Muslims—and declared: "So death is not a thing. I'm not gonna back down, no matter what."

For the most part, however, Jeffries picked on the Jews, and invoked something called "The African Holy Ghost" as his source of strength in resisting "devilish" Jewish efforts to annihilate him. His charge that Jews had masterminded the slave trade from headquarters like the synagogue of Amsterdam was only one piece of his wide-ranging, two-hour rant. Denouncing Diane Ravitch, for example, as the "ultimate, supreme, sophisticated, debonair racist—pure and simple," he declared:

> In fact, she is the new standard. The old standard was a Bible Belt Texas rural family. That's the standard for the textbooks that went into the schools for generations. Now the new standard is not a Bible Belt Texas family but a sophisticated Texas Jew. And that standard is not good enough either—because many people, such as the Ravitches, who happen to be Jewish, have blinded us on the attack coming from the Jewish community—systematic, unrelenting. And until we can look at it and deal with it, there's no efforts we can make that're going to be successful. Not anti-Semitic to raise the issue—but if you do not deal with it, you're fooling yourself.

What distinguishes Leonard Jeffries from any number of other crackpots on the racial hustings these days are his academic credentials. Jeffries received tenure and became chairman of his department in 1972, the year after he won his doctorate from Columbia. He has never published, but he seems less interested in having a reputation among scholars than in exercising an influence on black identity in the streets. He insists on the honorifics "Dr." and "Professor"; with his City College title and in his West African cap and flowing robes, lugging around a pile of books—he calls them his "ammunition"—he unleashes diatribes on the lecture circuit which have their share of lucid moments, factual or interpretative historical accounts that are unobjectionable, if hardly scholarly. He possesses wit, oratorical flourish, even charm, and uses his hybrid academic/African authenticity to play the college-accredited shaman, tapping black rage in the streets. And the longer he gets away with it, the more legitimate he appears—the more he appears to be speaking a truth which the powers-that-be cannot deny. After all, if he were a charlatan, "they" would have stopped him by now, would they not?

But the answer is that they would not—and the reason goes to the heart of the crisis in racial politics today, both on and off the campuses. Jeffries wraps himself in the convenient and congenial mantle of multiculturalism, in precisely the same way that the one-time Klansman and Nazi, David Duke, wraps himself in the mantle of the Republican party. And, again in the same way, he gives multiculturalism a bad name. But it is not through the logic of multiculturalism, or political correctness, or affirmative action that Jeffries holds on at CCNY. It is through the power of intimidation. He speaks in the rhetoric of contemporary academic discourse, and enjoys the cover of academic freedom and tenure, but he is no more "about" those things than the rioting in Crown Heights was about a multicultural reform of the pre-kindergarten-through-12th-grade social-studies curriculum in New York state. He is a black supremacist, who uses his classroom to teach his notion that the skin pigment melanin endows blacks with physical and intellectual superiority, and that the "ice people" of Europe are thieves who have consistently visited "destruction, domination, and death" on the "communal, cooperative, and collective" "sun people" of Africa.

Jeffries's Albany audience received his speech warmly, but the wider world might never have been the wiser if the state-owned cable-television channel, NYSCAN, had not aired a videotape as part of its public-service coverage of state-sponsored programs. That was how Fredric Dicker, the New York *Post*'s Albany correspondent, came across it. He "broke" the story on August 5, two weeks to the day before the roving gang of young blacks in Crown Heights, angered by an automobile accident in which a black child had been killed by a car driven by a Hasid, spotted a man in a black hat crossing the street, shouted, "Kill the Jew," set upon him, and left him dying of knife wounds.

In the period between the *Post*'s story and the stabbing death of Yankel Rosenbaum, Leonard Jeffries had become something of a folk hero in the martyrology of New York's militant black community. While the leaders of Jewish organizations, several newspaper editorial boards, and white elected officials, from New York City Council members to Governor Mario Cuomo, tripped over one another to issue vigorous denunciations of the man's bigotry, black officials were largely silent, and a number of Jeffries's colleagues, as well as various black clergymen and the black newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*, rallied to his defense. Not one of the sixteen black members of the state Assembly would sign an open letter denouncing the speech.

The color divide over Jeffries came as a shock to many liberals and civil-rights advocates who had assumed that racism was racism whether practiced by blacks or whites. The fact that the vast majority of influential black leaders closed ranks in silence or in vocal support of Jeffries left deep wounds in the civil-rights community that have yet to be fully examined or even acknowledged. But Jeffries's boosters were unrepentant. They seized the offensive, claiming that *he* was being pounced on unfairly; his remarks were protected by freedom of speech and his tenured job, on the

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public payroll, was protected by academic freedom; charges of anti-Semitism were nothing but a smear campaign by people who could not face the "truth" he had to tell; the "attack" on him was just a diversionary tactic by those determined to destroy multiculturalist educational reform, a civil-rights cause for which he was being made a fall guy.

Evidently, many people felt that if Jeffries was on the "right" side in the culture wars, it did not really matter that he was an anti-Semite: as Juan Gonzales, a columnist in the *Daily News*, wrote in early August, "Those who want to punish [Jeffries] for his beliefs and remove him from the classroom are using some of his crudest and inexcusable statements, in some instances out of context, to silence a growing revolution in education." For others, the matter was far simpler: it is a common article of faith in the pro-Jeffries camp that a black man cannot be a racist. And then there were those who suspected Jeffries might be out of line, but who saw the public ire arrayed against him as utterly disproportionate to his offense.

Jeffries himself was in Africa when word of the speech hit the streets. When he returned on August 14 he found hundreds of supporters gathered at the airport. There had already been a march of 500 in Harlem, and the next day saw a rally at the Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn where several thousand fans gathered to cheer as they watched a rerun of the Albany speech. On that occasion, the New York *Times* reported, the crowd was brought to its feet by the activist reverend, Herbert Daughtry, who brandished his fists and cried: "Up, you mighty race! Up, you mighty race! Fight, you mighty race!"

Wilbert Tatum, publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, has said that "the extent of the attack against Len just got the black middle class's back up like nothing else in a long time." Tatum, who calls Jeffries an old friend, insists that neither he nor his Jewish wife and children found anything anti-Semitic in the Albany speech. In his newspaper, Tatum published a report on another Jeffries speech, this one given in Harlem, on the "curriculum of liberation":

> "Let me clarify my views," Dr. Jeffries said, after a long exegesis on the role of Jews in the African slave trade, "if they say we are destroying Western civilization with our proposals, then I say let it happen quickly, because Western civilization is nothing more than an institutionalized, sophisticated form of barbarism."

The *Amsterdam News* also ran an ad for "The Committee to Defend Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Jr.," which gave as its contact address the CCNY black-studies department office. The ad expressed support for Jeffries's statements in the name of "the African people of Africa, America, and around the World," and warned that "the Black Community is holding all responsible ethnic groups and media accountable for any threats, slander, and misquotes attributed to Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Jr."

A blunter message was distributed on the CCNY campus and in surrounding Harlem neighborhoods in the form of an unsigned flyer warning that "the New York *Post* and the Jewish people" were being considered the responsible parties. That notice ended with the ironic reminder that "freedom of speech is the law."

FREEDOM of speech, however, has never been a significant issue in the Jeffries affair. Whatever Jeffries and his defenders may claim to the contrary, no one has ever disputed his right to spew racist doggerel. The question instead was whether in so doing he had violated his trust and responsibilities as department chairman, whether City College could and should remove him from that honorary position, and whether the school could fire him without violating his tenure. The answer in each case was yes, but City College had so consistently refused to take any action against Jeffries that one would almost seem justified in suspecting a conspiracy at work to protect him.

Before the Crown Heights riots knocked Jeffries out of the news, the president of City College, Bernard Harleston, who is black, announced that he would conduct a thorough review of the professor's behavior. In mid-September he ordered the provost, Robert Pfeffer, to determine Jeffries's fitness to continue as chairman. Such a review might reasonably have been expected to cover the Albany speech, to examine whether or not Jeffries's scholarly apparatus in the classroom was as rickety, his delivery as manic, his racism as vigorous as in an off-campus pulpit, and to poke around a bit in his past to learn how he had been doing his job and what his reputation was among colleagues at CCNY and elsewhere.

Contacted by phone at that time, an agitated Jeffries told me, "There is no investigation. There is no investigation." As it turned out, he was, for once, very nearly right. While Harleston had promised the public a "thorough review," his instructions to Pfeffer stated that "the ideas [Jeffries] has expressed, including the speech he recently delivered in Albany, are not germane to this review." Harleston also forbade the provost to consider anything in Jeffries's record prior to June 1, 1991, when a previous review had cleared him of any outstanding charges. At that time, Jeffries's department had unanimously voted to support the trustees' renewal of his chairmanship for a standard three-year term.

As a result, Pfeffer was left with nothing to review but Jeffries's summer vacation, much of which had been spent in Africa, and "the impact his public statements have had, if any, upon the present operations of the college, and his department." The provost was particularly urged to poll Jeffries's colleagues in black studies, but that was

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not much different from asking Jeffries what he thought of himself. The department he put together stands squarely behind him, so much so that when he announced in the fall that he believed a secret society of Jewish faculty members was operating in the college, the black-studies department called upon the CCNY faculty senate to investigate "a clear pattern of manipulation of decision-making by a small self-selected group of faculty who have acted in a 'concert of mutual interests' under the guise of either a fraternity, a Kabala or a Cabal."

What Pfeffer learned in his review remains unknown. When at the end of October the trustees came to vote on the renewal of Jeffries's chairmanship, the president's office, noting the confidentiality of personnel matters, refused to release the review. Trustees were only allowed to view a report afterward, and even then only in the presence of an aide to Harleston. But by then anything they might have learned would be too late. They had already voted to renew Jeffries's chairmanship for an unprecedented one-year probationary period. The president had told them that Jeffries was clearly bad news for both race relations and public relations—at a time of dire fiscal crisis for the college, alumni contributions had taken a big hit on account of him—but Harleston also said he feared unrest on campus, and even a riot in Harlem. Rather than do the right thing, he advised the trustees to cave in to this hint of menace. As they voted, Leonard Jeffries harangued a cheering crowd of several hundred on the sidewalk outside.

"Keep in mind," Harleston told reporters afterward, "that at this particular time in the history of the city there's a lot of tension." He does not seem to have kept in his own mind that Jeffries was a major contributor to that tension.

BERNARD HARLESTON has a long history of being soft on Leonard Jeffries. At least as far back as 1984 he sat on his hands after Jeffries launched an anti-Semitic attack on a professor who was being interviewed for a job as director of international studies. The candidate, a graduate of Brooklyn College, subsequently withdrew his application and went on to a prestigious job elsewhere, but not without recording the experience that had turned him away.

"On two occasions," he wrote to Harleston, "one public and the other private, patently racist and anti-Semitic remarks were made to me. You personally were accused of being no more than a 'tool' of white Jewish power brokers." The candidate went on to list other offenses, including the "paranoid" insistence of his harasser that funding sources like the United States Information Agency and the Agency for International Development were "intelligence agencies." He concluded prophetically:

> Colleges and universities in this country are places where we strive to dispel the darkness, not propagate it. City College historically has been one of our great institutions of higher learning. If forces of darkness are allowed to go unchallenged at City, then the institution will suffer irreparable damage.

Harleston did nothing. The faculty of the political-science department mailed the ex-candidate a letter of apology, deploring the treatment he had received, but there is no evidence that the offending party was ever held accountable. This summer, when the furor over Jeffries's Albany speech was in the news, the former candidate dropped a line to Ann Reynolds, chancellor of the City University, to remind her of his experience and to establish clearly for the record that Jeffries had been his antagonist.

Harleston's inaction in 1984—and there may have been earlier instances—set a precedent which Jeffries took to heart. As the years went by, charges of misconduct, race-baiting, and harassment piled up, as well as criticisms of his conduct in the classroom, from excessive tardiness to intimidation and the teaching of patent falsehoods. Occasionally these charges were investigated, and occasionally there were mild censures of Jeffries's language or tone, efforts to assure the public that the school did not necessarily endorse everything its professors said. Clearly, CCNY wished to avoid trouble; but that does not mean, as Harelston likes to claim, that he was unable to take firmer action.

According to Jordan Kurland, associate general secretary of the American Association of University Professors, "it would be acceptable to initiate dismissal proceedings" if Jeffries taught in his classroom what he has been preaching outside it—that Jewish conspiracies are to blame for black suffering, for instance. Kurland also notes that "there have been cases of racial harassment, or abusive language directed against a particular individual, that have led to dismissal of tenured faculty." A strong case might have been made against Jeffries on either basis if the school had wanted to make it. For numerous eyewitness reports from Jeffries's classroom suggest that his teaching has been, if anything, more uncontrolled on campus than off.

Harleston, like Jeffries, has invoked academic freedom and the school's policy of hands-off respect for the activities of tenured faculty. But that is not what has constrained him from dealing appropriately with Jeffries. As was made clear in a case in federal court last fall, Harleston *did* find it within himself to punish a white professor for his racist views, even though there was no hint of evidence suggesting that the professor, Michael Levin of the philosophy department, had ever sought to teach his views in his classes.

THE problem of Michael Levin has shadowed Leonard Jeffries for years, ever since Levin began publishing his belief that

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blacks are genetically less disposed to intelligence than whites, and that white store owners, for example, are rationally justified, out of fear of crime, in discriminating against blacks simply on the grounds that they are black. Such theorizing is something of a hobby for Levin; the students in his philosophy classes, when polled by the New York *Times* last year, expressed unawareness of his fascination with race. The *Times* even found a black South African woman in one of his classes who sang Levin's praises.

Levin says he is not a bigot or a hater, and prefers to be called a "racialist" rather than a racist, but he accepts either label. He does not attach his racism to any broader political agenda, describing it rather as a matter of "moral philosophy." Although he speaks as a professor of philosophy, he does not claim to speak for philosophers in general, as Jeffries claims to speak for blacks, and he has no apparent following. When the CUNY trustees voted on Jeffries's chairmanship in October, a handful of Jews chanting, "Jeffries has to go!" were confronted by blacks chanting, "Levin has to go!" The Jews fell silent a moment, then started shouting, "Levin and Jeffries have to go!"

Levin is a vigorous supporter of Jeffries's right to say whatever he likes, but Levin and Jeffries are not, in fact, the same thing. Nor has Harleston treated them equally. Jeffries's classroom teaching has drawn complaints, but he has been exonerated, while Levin, whose students were unaware of his controversial views, had to sue Harleston to get an injunction against the college to prevent further stigmatization and damage to his academic reputation. Levin's brief rested on two basic charges: that the school had failed to provide proper security to prevent disruption of his classes by activists, and had refused to enforce the campus code against such agitators; and that the school had undermined Levin's teaching by writing letters to all enrollees, warning that he was "controversial" and offering them the opportunity to enroll in sections of his courses taught by other professors. Levin argued that the administration's practices violated his civil rights, and Judge Kenneth Conboy agreed.

Conboy's decision came in mid-September, and Harleston immediately initiated an appeal. That action did not square with the decision a month later to renew Jeffries's chairmanship. On the contrary, Harleston was effectively implementing a double standard, fighting for the right to keep punishing Levin's racism while rewarding Jeffries's. Since the faculty senate had discouraged disciplinary action against both men, Harleston was clearly acting not on principle but on his own feelings, or on some broader sense of what would be acceptable to the campus, including the sense of who would be most likely to riot if he displeased them.

Harleston now claims that he will ask the trustees to revoke Jeffries's chairmanship in June. In fact, he says, that was the plan all along, implying a secret understanding with the trustees to buy time while he sought a replacement. But the delay—with its absurd hint that this is not an open-and-shut case—has only strengthened Jeffries's hand. His career as a self-proclaimed martyr of the black-liberation struggle continues to thrive. Throughout the fall of last year he followed a hectic lecture schedule, traveling the country to deliver his standard two- and three-hour stump speeches. Reports suggest that he has toned down his references to Jews—enough, at least, to permit his audiences to go away thinking his reputation as a racist has been exaggerated.

In the end, 1991 was a good year for Leonard Jeffries: he parried the biggest attack on him yet, and gained a much wider hearing than ever before. It did not even seem to matter that the morning after CCNY renewed his chairmanship, a student reporter from the Harvard *Crimson*, a black Jew named Eliot Morgan, went public with charges that Jeffries had threatened his life during an interview.

Morgan filed a complaint with the Manhattan district attorney, but the case—one man's word against another—will probably end inconclusively. Jeffries may boast about having the courage of his convictions, but he has flatly denounced a former student's recent testimony that he told a class that "Jews were dogs," as well as reports in the black magazine, *Emerge*, that he rejects whites and even light-skinned blacks as students. In late January, he was due to deliver a keynote address to a conference of Holocaust revisionists in Los Angeles, where ironically he was to share the bill with a rogue's gallery of leading white supremacists. He withdrew at the last minute, following a public outcry, and described himself as the victim of a "media lynching."

Only then did Harleston announce that he was looking to replace Jeffries, complaining that he was finding no takers for the job. That is hardly a surprise; Jeffries created his department in his image, and assuming he is removed in June, he will in all probability still remain on the scene to bully any new titular head. Thus has City College reaped the consequences of two decades of harboring, protecting, and rewarding an unabashed racist and demagogue.

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What Louis Kahn Built

Michael J. Lewis

THE architect Louis I. Kahn (1901-74) was a classic late bloomer. He was nearly sixty when Richards Medical Laboratory, his first project to be internationally celebrated, was built at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. At an age when many artists are wrapping up their careers, Kahn was just beginning his. Over the next fifteen years he produced a solid body of work that met with almost uniform critical acclaim, something true of none of his contemporaries. Of these buildings the best known are the Jonas Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, the library at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and the new capital for Bangladesh in Dhaka. When he died in 1974 he was at the peak of his influence, a kind of architectural oracle in Philadelphia, where he had moved as a child from his native Estonia and where his career had always centered.

That career is now the subject of a vast exhibition, "Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture," which will open in June at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, after showings in Paris and Philadelphia. Long overdue, the exhibit is the first major retrospective of Kahn's work and the first study of this architect that is historical and critical, and not merely hagiographical. It has been intelligently and gracefully assembled, and is distinguished by its liberal use of models and photographs, Kahn's work being especially photogenic. Accompanying the exhibition is a comprehensive catalogue containing a meticulous and impeccably researched essay by David B. Brownlee and David DeLong.* Here Kahn's biography and works are discussed, and here his mythic position in America's postwar architecture is assessed.

As myths go, it is a good one, with broad themes and boldly drawn battle lines, and as with all good myths there is much truth to it. According to the story, modern architecture in the late 1950's had become stagnant, either reduced to tired modernist formulas or else degenerating into idiosyncratic personal experiments, like Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum or Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal at Kennedy airport. Onto this stage strode Kahn, who returned modern architecture to a state of vitality. This he did by elemental and powerful means—by using solid and substantial materials, by bathing these materials in natural light, by making monumental spaces out of abstract geometric forms, and, above all, by once again making architecture serious and solemn. In short, Kahn found a modern architecture that was essentially functional and gave it an inspirational dimension. This is a restoration myth, with Kahn cast in the epic role of the restorer.

KAHN's early life marked a gradual victory of ability over environment. He was born in 1901 to an assimilated Jewish family on the island of Saaremaa, Estonia, the son of a paymaster in the Russian army. In 1906 his family came to Philadelphia where they eked out an indifferent living, his mother making textile samples. Kahn's drawing talents having attracted attention, he entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1920 to study under the tutelage of the great classicist Paul Philippe Cret. His job after graduation was a plum: assistant to John Molitor, a gentlemanly alcoholic who served as Philadelphia's city architect and for whom Kahn ghost-designed the Palace of Education and several large exhibition halls for America's 1926 Sesquicentennial Exposition. His earnings from this project were enough to pay for a year-long study trip overseas, and for a first peek at the modern architecture of Europe.

Kahn returned in 1929, perhaps the worst year in history for an architect to come on the job market. As the Depression deepened, he scrambled for meager commissions: altering storefronts, rendering other architects' designs, even submitting a design for a memorial to Lenin to be built in Leningrad.

In 1935 Kahn established the trajectory of his

MICHAEL J. LEWIS, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, occupies the position of historiographer at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

* This essay, along with other essays on Kahn and illustrations of his work, appears in *Louis I. Kahn*, Museum of Contemporary Art/Rizzoli International, 448 pp., $60.00.

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career with a project for a planned community at Hightstown, New Jersey, to house 200 Jewish garment workers. This was the brainchild of Benjamin Brown, a Ukrainian-born promoter of cooperative communities who served as a housing consultant to the Soviet Union, and it was as close to a collective on the Soviet model as any housing project in the United States: a self-sufficient community, the residents earning their livelihoods from cooperative farming in the summer and textile work in the winter. With strong support, ranging from the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union to Albert Einstein, the Department of the Interior was persuaded to bankroll the community. Kahn, who served as chief assistant to the project architect, designed many of the major buildings.

The Philadelphia press branded Hightstown a Stalinist "commune," and the state licensing board tried to sabotage the registration application of Kahn's collaborator, whose pro-Soviet views were well known. For Kahn, whose politics were more nearly "progressive" than radical, this was his closest flirtation with the prewar Left. "You wouldn't find Kahn marching in the May Day parade," one of his friends has said of his activism in the 1930's. In general he seems to have subscribed to the views of the journal he helped edit, *Shelter*, which saw politics as a choice of "Housing or Armaments." All this changed between 1939 and 1941, when Kahn became actively involved in providing both housing *and* armaments by designing housing projects for defense workers. For much of the next decade his principal work was for the U.S. government.

After World War II Kahn was recruited to teach at Yale, where he commuted weekly while running his Philadelphia office. His practice consisted primarily of commissions for modernist houses for a largely Jewish clientele drawn from his (and his wife's) circle of friends. These flat-roofed, open-plan houses may in retrospect look prophetic, but in the late 1940's they seemed products of their time.

Around 1950, Kahn began to exchange the sheer surfaces and dematerialized walls of his early work for more geometric and more substantial forms. Architecturally this was a shift from Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus to Le Corbusier; materially it was a shift from steel and glass to concrete. His first prestigious commission, an addition to the Yale Art Gallery in 1951, signaled the change. Its minimal brick exterior, almost self-deprecating, housed wide galleries without intermediate partitions, a scheme made possible by the concrete space frame that spanned the ceilings. The frame itself was based on a repeated geometric module of interlocking triangles that Buckminster Fuller had been exploring. Kahn remained interested in these honeycomb geometric systems for the next decade, although his interest had begun to fade by the time he designed the Richards Medical Laboratory at the end of the 1950's.

Thirty years after its completion, it is now difficult to credit that the Richards project, with its innocuous concrete frame and brick and glass curtain walls, was taken for a revolutionary building—in the words of the architectural historian Vincent Scully, "one of the greatest buildings of modern times." Richards did, however, overturn one of the fundamental tenets of modernism according to the Bauhaus system. This was the notion that there must be no hierarchy of spaces within a building—that is, that there must be no distinction in importance, no progression from simple utilitarian rooms to richer formal rooms. Within a Bauhaus building, all space was to be treated equally; both the mighty director's office and the humblest janitor's closet were to be equally functional in detail and materials. This had been one of the most radical of modernist doctrines, dismissing at one blow virtually all of the monumental architecture of the West.

At Richards, Kahn reintroduced hierarchy to architecture. But it was a hierarchy of a peculiar sort. Here he coined his celebrated notion of "served" and "servant" spaces, emphatically distinguishing the laboratory rooms, for example, from the ventilation towers, stairwells, and corridors that supported them. The laboratories were housed in six well-lighted cubes (too well-lighted, it turned out), which were bracketed by an outer ring of sheer brick shafts containing the auxiliary functions.

While designing Richards, Kahn lavished most of his attention upon the plan and the system of construction; the overall composition came later. But the building was appreciated for somewhat different reasons. Visitors to the Museum of Modern Art, where the design was exhibited in the summer of 1961, were struck less by its formal hierarchy than by its exterior character. After a decade of bland steel-and-glass boxes, Kahn's free grouping of brick towers seemed the most interesting feature of Richards, something picturesque and expressive, as animated and rambling as a medieval Italian hill town. Scully enthusiastically declared that the ventilation towers recalled the *campanile* of San Gimignano, and the search for such architectural pedigrees soon became a staple in critical writing about Kahn's work.

Following Richards, Kahn's work changed again rather quickly. There swiftly appeared a series of buildings whose principal hallmark was their organization around public spaces of monumental scale and character. Simple in their geometry, likewise simple in their materials of concrete, slate, and brick, these

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spaces were lighted by natural sunlight introduced from above through monitors in the corners of the ceiling. Kahn was at his best in the making of such spaces, like the great public reading room of the Phillips Exeter Academy Library or the galleries of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. While he did not abandon his early interest in construction, it was now subordinated to a growing concern with the emotional effects that the spaces of a building might produce. And for this he began to take his cues from history, speaking incessantly about it in his classes.

By 1964 Kahn was calling for "very archaic-looking buildings, buildings that will be considered archaic in the future." At the National Assembly in Dhaka (1962-83), East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, he achieved something close to his goal. Forced to use brick, the cheapest building material in an unindustrialized economy, he made an asset out of necessity, finding precedent in imperial Rome for a monumental architecture of brick. Actually, this new monumentality was less that of Roman architecture than of Roman archeology, of buildings stripped by time of their decoration and preserved as raw construction, vessels emptied of content.

One historical form that fascinated Kahn was the axis. This device, the alignment of spaces along a precise linear sequence that converges upon a space of great importance, was at the core of the classical tradition in which he had been steeped as a student. Kahn revived the device in his Kimbell Art Museum at Fort Worth, Texas (1966-72); the interior spaces, composed of parallel aisles capped with curved concrete vaults, admitting natural light from above, were like the vaulted aisles of a medieval church. Even more dramatic was the research complex he built for Jonas Salk at La Jolla, California (1959-65). Treating it as a kind of monastic settlement, Kahn organized the research and guest rooms in compounds gathered around a single monumental axis, a mighty crescendo that culminates in a triumphant vista of the Pacific.

Once again Kahn was overturning established modernist doctrine. There had scarcely been an architectural device more reviled in the 1930's and 1940's than the formal axis. Traditionally, an architectural axis is important because it points in a straight line to something, such as a throne or an altar. But neither throne nor altar figured in the world view of the Bauhaus modernists; the axis was the formal machinery of a discredited and bankrupt world, the tool of deposed kings (Louis XIV's Hall of Mirrors) or modern tyrants (the vast corridor in Hitler's *Reichskanzlerei*). The axis fell by the wayside; there was nothing worth pointing to anymore. And yet Kahn not only resurrected the axis but was rewarded for it with the praise of critics.

Still, as with Kahn's hierarchy of spaces, his axiality is of a curious sort. It does not culminate in some ceremonial focus—nor is it often visible to the viewer. At his Erdman dormitory for Bryn Mawr College, Kahn strung three cubes together along their corners; the geometric scheme is crystal clear on paper, but to a visitor the right-angle jogs are utterly baffling. With Kahn, in other words, an axis does not show the way to somewhere, it is geometry in its own right. His favorite Roman monument was the Pantheon, itself a directionless monument meant to commemorate all the gods, lighted by a single circular window at its apex, the sort of all-embracing gesture for which he came to have much sympathy in his later life. Perhaps the clearest statement of his values is the great monumental axis of the Salk Institute, pointing triumphantly to the sea. In Kahn's hierarchy the apex is neither throne nor altar, but nature itself, some sort of pantheistic universe of light and natural forces.

KAHN's late successes are so spectacular that they overshadow his failures. Some of these, such as his lifelong inability to push through any of his visionary city plans for Philadelphia, were especially galling to him. But there were even more acute failures. In 1954 Kahn made plans for the Adath Jeshurun synagogue near Elkins Park in North Philadelphia, at virtually the same moment that Frank Lloyd Wright was asked to build the nearby Beth Shalom synagogue. Kahn was not yet as prestigious as Wright, and his designs for a triangular sanctuary inserted within a cylindrical mantle were quietly shelved. By contrast, Wright's surging pyramid was built to instant acclaim, and it quickly became one of America's most celebrated pieces of Jewish architecture.

Kahn's insistence on the collective and the universal, his ideal of an architecture so spacious that it could encompass everyone, endeared him to architectural philosophers; it did not necessarily endear him to clients. Here, perhaps, lay one reason for his failure with Jewish institutions. Although he was entrusted with half-a-dozen major projects in his final decades, all that came of them was a small synagogue in Chappaqua, New York, and the Jewish Community Center Bathhouse in Trenton, New Jersey, itself a small sliver of a much larger project from which he was dismissed. Of his projects for religious buildings in general, his most successful remains the simple brick church he designed between 1959 and 1969 for a Unitarian congregation in Rochester, New York.

Religious qualities are often ascribed to Kahn's late architecture, but its religious spirit was by no means specifically Jewish, or specifically anything: he spoke of evoking "not a religion but the essence religion." This vision consorted with the general ecumenical mood of the period, which

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may account for Kahn's rather surprising popularity among Unitarians and Vatican II-era Catholics. Not surprisingly, however, it failed to impress his Jewish clients. Most of them had worshiped in synagogues built in the 19th century, whose vaguely "eastern" styles had maintained a distinct presence in the American landscape. This was something that Frank Lloyd Wright, himself ultimately a 19th-century architect, seems to have sensed intuitively; his clients at Elkins Park *knew* his angular pyramid evoked the Burning Bush. In Kahn's work, by contrast, apart from the necessary details of ritual, there is little difference in formal character among the Unitarian church in Rochester, the unbuilt synagogue in Philadelphia, and the mosque at the National Assembly in Dhaka. In reaching for the universal, Kahn lost the particular.

SIMILAR problems vexed Kahn's most poignant failure—his Holocaust Memorial in New York. In 1965 a large number of Jewish organizations joined together to form a committee to erect a monument to the victims of the Final Solution; the following year the city offered a site in Battery Park, at the southernmost tip of Manhattan, and Kahn was quickly appointed architect. This was exactly the type of commission for which Kahn should have been ideally suited—a monument of profound tragedy, related to powerful themes from Jewish history.

But Kahn faltered. His first scheme called for a stark platform on which would be raised nine piers, each fifteen feet in height and made of translucent glass bricks. This solution troubled the building committee, which felt that the number nine might suggest the nine months of pregnancy, evoking birth rather than death; they asked him instead to use six piers, to represent the six million Holocaust victims. Late in 1967 Kahn submitted a scheme of six piers organized around a commemorative central pier. Once again the committee wondered whether, apart from the literal symbolism of the number six, there was any explicit connection between the monument and the Holocaust. Unwilling to change his basic design, Kahn revised the central pier, which was now to be hollowed out as a kind of shrine, decorated with Hebrew, Yiddish, and English inscriptions and completed with some piece of explicitly Jewish art capping the ceiling. It was a clever compromise: Kahn preserved the abstract geometry of his scheme while giving the committee the symbolism it wanted.

Kahn was hardly the first artist to stumble over the problem of expressing the vastness of the Holocaust. He was tugged in two directions, expected to show the event as something unique in history, but also to relate it to other more general themes, particularly the long history of oppression of the Jews. But the more his project became about *everything*, the less it expressed *something*. Ultimately, fundraising problems prevented the construction of Kahn's monument, but the whole story reveals one of the weaknesses of his final works. His subject matter was becoming more and more general, until it seemed that Kahn was only interested in the broadest abstractions, pursuing an architecture freed from material, program, or content, literally an architecture of "Silence and Light," the phrase that became his mantra at the end.

A HISTORIAN complained some years ago that the eccentric British architect Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) was still not properly appreciated, perhaps because of the "disgusting affluence" of his clients. Lutyens has since been rehabilitated. Disgusting affluence, however, has not; architectural critics are generally implacably hostile toward commercial success. This was true in the 1930's, when Kahn's architectural ideas were formed, and it is true today. The catalogue to the famous International Style show of 1932, the first major exhibition of modernist architecture in America, sneered at the great art-deco towers of the 1920's, already then a thing of the past, "We are asked to take seriously the architectural taste of real-estate speculators, renting agents, and mortgage brokers."

For those made uneasy by commercial success there was never any problem with Kahn. When he came of age in the 1930's, architectural journals which a decade earlier had featured skyscrapers and townhouses fronting on Central Park were now dominated by the serried slabs of mass housing. In the wake of the Depression, the situation in America had come to resemble that in Europe, where government rather than the private builder was the most prominent client. Kahn spent most of the decade learning to cultivate civic commissions, as he went from the City Planning Commission to the Philadelphia Housing Authority to the United States Housing Authority. After World War II, when private building began again in earnest, Kahn devoted much of his time to teaching.

As a result, Kahn never underwent what for many architects is a formative experience—the cultivation of a clientele by building a social circle, the contact in church or club, the reaching-out to those of similar views or preferences. He had learned to make the rounds of government corridors, instead of wooing clients in corporate boardrooms or on golf courses.

Kahn's career was forever stamped by this early experience. The catalogue to the exhibition says that he "rescued modernism from the banality induced by its commercial success," and indeed among his major works there are no office buildings, skyscrapers, or stores, and no speculative

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real-estate developments or buildings that have to advertise for occupants. His plans for commercial skyscrapers were invariably rejected by clients. Instead, his career was based on institutional buildings—libraries, schools, churches and synagogues. In the America of the 1950's and 1960's, Kahn conducted an architectural practice that flourished as if there were no such thing as advertising, commerce, or speculative building. It was as if, for Kahn, the 30's went on and on.

The turn away from architectural commercialism that characterized Kahn's career is perhaps admirable, but one wonders what is to be learned from it. For most practicing architects, to be able to refuse work, let alone an entire class of work, is a luxury. Nor was Kahn's vision of the monumental particularly easy to emulate. In place of the powerful and explicit symbolism that has historically justified architectural monumentality, Kahn could offer only inspiration and vague talk about human assembly.

To hold this against him would, however, be wrong. It is the task of the client, not of the architect, to provide the ideas that justify a building and the tremendous expenditure that it requires. If by default the task is left to the architect, he can only improvise. The inspirational if rather generic monumentality of Kahn's architecture reflects our own uncertainty about our institutions and their ultimate validity. It is not surprising that the only institution in which Kahn always seemed to have a specific and active confidence was the educational—perhaps, as well, this is his most nearly Jewish trait as an architect.

In any event, Kahn made the best of his task, and often achieved poetry in the process. In the public spaces of his final buildings he recreated the feeling of being in the hulk of some vast Roman building where the precious marble panels have long been pried off, leaving awed visitors to ask themselves what rituals and ceremonies once took place there.

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Sepharad '92

Chaim Raphael

One of the more agreeable events in modern Jewish history is due to unfold on March 31 of this year when the King of Spain joins a special service in the synagogue of Madrid in order to rescind the Edict of Expulsion signed by his ancestors King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella exactly 500 years earlier. "Agreeable" seems a better word than "momentous" or "symbolic." For while the successive disasters and triumphs of our era in Jewish history have been of a dimension which defies ordinary description, the Madrid ceremony and the extended celebrations and conferences that will follow throughout Spain suggest simple, unalloyed happiness. In such a mood one is free to savor the host of ironies that this Jewish quincentennial—Sepharad '92, as it has been dubbed—generates in our consciousness.

In the forefront, of course, there is the oddity of celebrating in the same breath two related but disparate anniversaries: the expulsion of the Jews and the voyage of Christopher Columbus. In actuality, the contrast they make is a grim one. For four months after the promulgation of the Edict of Expulsion, a ramshackle flow of ill-equipped small boats, crammed with Jews, their hearts full of desolation, was putting to sea from Spanish ports. The last Jew left Spain on July 31, 1492, two days before the fast of Tisha B'Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. It was three days later, on August 3, 1492, that Columbus set sail in a very different spirit, braced by the expectation of bringing back from "the Indies" a prize of gold, diamonds, and spices, and of establishing at the same time a vastly expanded base for Christianity.

But if this was the original story, Sepharad '92 surrounds it with irony. Who could have foreseen that the pitiful and derelict refugees would emerge within a few years as sophisticated and fully settled Sephardi communities all around the Mediterranean, linked in migration and trade with kin in northern Europe—and across the Atlantic? In the longer range, who could have foreseen, centuries after the heartless destruction of the great Spanish-Jewish community at the moment of Columbus's voyage, the emergence in his New-Found-Land of what has become the greatest Jewish community of the world? The great 12th-century Spanish-Jewish poet, Judah Halevi, was ready to give up all the bounty of Spain to be at one with Zion, the passion of his life. Who could have foreseen that, as a high point of the quincentennial, a sovereign Jewish state in Zion would be joining Spain in celebration of its national day with a gala concert in Toledo by its own Philharmonic Orchestra?

It is no distraction from the joy of the quincentennial to note that in Spain, as elsewhere in Europe today, anti-Zionist agitation remains an unpleasant and worrisome fact of political life. Nor, moving back again in time, is it inappropriate to remind ourselves of the scene in Spain that led up to the expulsion of 1492. A hundred years earlier, in 1391, what had been nearly a seven-century-long period of social and cultural coexistence, however uneasy at times, had ended, almost abruptly, in a series of murderous "pogroms." This was, for the Jews, a unique *bouleversement*; for though they had been until then very distinctive in Spain, they were not alien to society as a whole, having constituted, indeed, one of the three elements—Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—out of which the Spanish character had evolved.

But now the Christian element, led by the Church, was undertaking to put Spanish consciousness on an exclusive course. At first the Church thought the Jewish presence could be suppressed by wholesale conversion; and in the century following the murders of 1391, conversions were indeed numerous. The results, however, were a cause of the greatest alarm. For one thing, far from being peacefully absorbed, thousands of converted Jews clung secretly to what they remembered of their ancient faith; these became known by the slang term "Marranos." For another thing, despite the massive seepage from formal Jewish life, business and even scholarly contacts between Marranos and those still openly professing Judaism continued to be upheld. To the Church, it seemed that nothing short of a removal of the Jewish element would do. This led to the full gearing-up of the Inquisition, dedicated to rooting out real or imagined heresy among the "New Christians," and finally to the expulsion of all who had remained Jews.

Thus did centuries of vitality and cultural brilliance end in trauma and tragedy. Yet even in tragedy there were moments of unexpected irony. It is perhaps not entirely surprising that when expulsion was finally imminent, the very rich Jews of Spain attempted to secure an

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amnesty by offering huge loans to Ferdinand and Isabella to relieve their permanent shortage of cash. The most famous of these leaders, Don Isaac Abrabanel, had been successively financial adviser to the king of Portugal and to the kingdom of Castile; and though he possessed untold resources and power, it is typical of the unusual character of Spain's very rich Jews that he is remembered above all as an outstanding Bible scholar and classical humanist. Somehow or other, he was able, when expulsion finally struck, to muster what he could and transfer to Italy, where he became adviser to the king of Naples and then a central figure in Venice, organizing international trade treaties.

ANOTHER irony emerges in the role played by some New Christians in helping Columbus to realize his dream. According to the late historian Cecil Roth, it was in large measure due to the enthusiasm and financial influence of a group of Marranos around the Aragonese court, notably Luis de Santangel and Gabriel Sánchez, that the Catholic sovereigns were finally persuaded to give their patronage to Columbus's expedition. To these two men Columbus wrote the report of his first journey, circulated throughout Europe after his return. Also, as historians of science well know, Columbus depended on nautical instruments perfected by Jews (such as Joseph Vecinho) and on astronomical tables drawn up by Abraham Zacuto.

Naturally, the great question in this connection is whether Columbus himself was a Marrano by descent. The most intriguing evidence lies not so much in his family background as in the date he finally chose for the start of his voyage. With regard to the former, there is some flimsy evidence that Columbus's family had lived in Majorca before moving to Genoa; and Majorca was a favored land for Marranos. With regard to the latter, the story is that his sailing was originally planned for August 2, but, supposedly aware of the fast-day of Tisha B'Av, Columbus thought it might spell doom for someone of Jewish origin to embark on that date, and hence decided to postpone for a day.

Aside from Columbus, any number of notable Spaniards have been identified as Jews by origin, sometimes without any real evidence. Inevitably Miguel de Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, has been a prime target in this not very serious game played by amateur and professional historians alike; after all, was not his father a surgeon, a frequent profession of Marranos? Even so formidable a historian as Américo Castro asserts firmly that *Don Quixote* could only be the work of a New Christian, someone "living on the periphery of Spanish society."

For undisputed literary credit, however, Jewish history is secure in Fernando de Rojas, whose masterpiece, *La Celestina*, published in 1499, was not only the first Spanish novel but the progenitor of the European novel altogether. Rojas is known to have been a direct convert himself, and other clues lie in the character of his book, a brilliant, quick-witted, self-exploratory dialogue-novel, exhibiting qualities of expression that have signed themselves as Jewish wherever and whenever they have subsequently appeared. Rojas could be an ancestor of Saul Bellow, another "nymph-troubled man" as witty as Rojas but with his own brand of "frenzied longings."

ALL this prodding for links may be small beer in itself, but it leads into what is perhaps the major issue raised by the twin quincentennials, which is how the vitality of both the Spaniards and the Sephardim has visibly ebbed and flowed over the centuries. In our own times we have witnessed a dual renascence, captured emblematically by the scheduled appearance of the immensely popular Spanish king in a Sephardi synagogue. As for the current fortunes of the Sephardim themselves, in their eastern and western diasporas, one might point, in England, to the emergence of Sir David Alliance from Iran as head of the world-famous Courtauld cotton complex, or the volcanic performance of the two Saatchi brothers from Iraq, who were the advertising geniuses associated with the rise of Margaret Thatcher. A parallel performance in France would be that of the twin Attali brothers, Jacques and Bernard, who arrived from Algeria as boys and after careers in the academic and business worlds have floated into general prominence, the former as head of the European Bank for Reconstruction, the latter as president of Air France.

In the arts, well-known Sephardi names include the French novelist Patrick Modiano, winner of the Prix Goncourt; Murray Perahia, the pianist; the late writer Primo Levi of Italy. Then there are Sir Anthony Caro, the sculptor; Edmond Safra, eminent banker of Geneva; Elias Canetti, Nobel Prize-winner for literature, who began life in Bulgaria—not to speak of such long-running families as the Mocattas, great bankers in England for over three centuries, or the huge industrial and social operations headed today by Lord Kadoorie, whose ancestors left Baghdad for India at the beginning of the 19th century.

IN 1935, during that brief moment when the Spanish government was Republican, a national celebration was held in Cordoba to mark the birth there, 800 years earlier, of the great Jewish philosopher Maimonides. In a spirit of contrition and reconciliation, open invitations to the event had been circulated among all Spanish-Jewish descendants settled in refugee countries around the Mediterranean. All were welcome to return; many did. The opening address, given by the Chief Rabbi of the Sephardi community of Sarajevo, was an hour-long speech in Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish tongue whose emergence goes back in time long before the expulsion.

To me, present at those ceremonies as a representative of Oxford University, it was as if a British audience of today were to be addressed in the purest Elizabethan English. Something like the extraordinary emotion of that event will surely be generated again when Sepharad '92 marks another new-old turn in the mysterious workings of Jewish and Spanish history.

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"Ghosts" and American Opera

Samuel Lipman

THIS past December, the Metropolitan Opera of New York, the only music-performance institution in the United States now prospering financially, presented the world premiere of *The Ghosts of Versailles*, a "Grand Opera Buffa in Two Acts" by the composer John Corigliano (born 1938) and his librettist William M. Hoffman (born 1939). Commissioned by the Met in 1979, *Ghosts* was the first new American opera to appear on its stage since the 1967 premiere of Marvin David Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Despite, or perhaps because of, its long gestation, the Met commitment to *Ghosts* was total: in addition to the relatively small amount of compensation ($50,000, it is said) for the composer and the librettist, the Met expended vastly larger sums—said to be over $2 million—on a lavish production. Nor did the company stint on name singers for the cast, which in the end included such highly regarded artists as the soprano Teresa Stratas, the mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne, and the baritone Håkan Hagegård. Perhaps most important, the conductor James Levine, the Met's artistic director and one of the most powerful figures on the international opera scene, watched closely over the work's progress, and gave much time to its preparation for performance.

It is easy to see why the Met chose to approach *Ghosts* so carefully. For many years now, the Met has been roundly criticized for the comfortable and safe nature of its choices in mainstream European repertory. The company's leadership has been even more strongly criticized for its inattention to American opera.

It is not that the Met, over more than a century of existence, has failed to put on American operas: since World War I, for example, it has presented operas by (in addition to Marvin David Levy, mentioned above) Samuel Barber (*Vanessa*, 1958, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1966), Joseph Breil (*The Legend*, 1919), Walter Damrosch (*The Man Without a Country*, 1937), Louis Gruenberg (*The Emperor Jones*, 1933), Henry Hadley (*Cleopatra's Night*, 1920), Howard Hanson (*Merry Mount*, 1934), John Adams Hugo (*The Temple Dancer*, 1919), Gian Carlo Menotti (*Amelia al Ballo*, 1938, *The Island God*, 1942, and *The Last Savage*, 1964), Bernard Rogers (*The Warrior*, 1947), John Laurence Seymour (*In the Pasha's Garden*, 1935), and Deems Taylor (*The King's Henchmen*, 1927, and *Peter Ibbetson*, 1931).

The list tells the story: Barber's two operas have enjoyed a vestigial existence, but as for the rest their fate has been complete disappearance from the repertory and oblivion even in the minds of aficionados. And even where Barber was concerned, when the Met gambled on opening its new opera house at Lincoln Center in 1966 with an ill-executed performance of his *Antony and Cleopatra*, the resounding failure was heard all around the operatic and musical world.

The objection has often been made that the posh and plush surroundings of the Met are the wrong setting for American opera; and it is true that over the past three decades the leaner and sparer New York City Opera has had a better record than the Met with American opera. But even on this rather lower level of grand-opera ambition, the City Opera's real successes, Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* (1954) and Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe* (1956), have sadly remained no more than touching evocations of American folklore. And though *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Hugo Weisgall's opera after the Pirandello play, was successful upon its premiere in 1959, the City Opera has never seen fit to revive it.

Away from the City Opera, the most talked-about American work of recent years has been *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), the Philip Glass-Robert Wilson collaboration, but even today, many years after its premiere, it still remains difficult to call this mixed-media extravaganza an opera. Nor do John Adams's *Nixon in China* (1987) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991) seem to fit comfortably into any widely accepted conception of opera.

Regardless of this poor track record, however, the perceived need for American operas has only increased in recent years, as fear that the tradition of European masterpieces is being exhausted has begun to seep into the hearts and minds of even the most hardened opera-lovers. Excitement is the watchword; as kooky new productions of old familiar works fail to win permanent places in audience affections, efforts quite naturally turn toward new opera, and at least part of the time, and even for such an international institution as the Met, new opera means American opera.

Reinforcing the effort it invested in the performance and production of *Ghosts*, the Met also put a great deal of work into assuring a favorable reception for the piece. Pre-premiere articles were legion: *Opera News*, the Met's interesting and glossy magazine (with a circulation of 125,000), devoted almost an entire issue to *Ghosts*, timed to appear on the date of the premiere,

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and also to serve as a guide for the broadcast two weeks later (on January 4); the previous issue had also contained a prospective survey of the work by the magazine's editor, Patrick J. Smith.

In addition to the great interest of opera-lovers in *Ghosts*, a marked interest has been shown by the homosexual community. Both Corigliano and Hoffman have been publicly concerned with the issue of AIDS—Corigliano has written the very well-received Symphony no. 1 (1990) as a memorial to those who have died from AIDS, and Hoffman is the author of the Obie-winning play *As Is* (1985), which has been called by many an AIDS-play (though Hoffman, according to an interview with him and Corigliano in the *Advocate*, resents this description, finding it "anti-gay and anti-AIDS").

Finally, further demonstrating the extent of its investment in *Ghosts*, the Met scheduled six performances in the several weeks following its December premiere, including a Texaco radio broadcast in January; the opera was also videotaped for broadcast next season on PBS.

THE plot of *The Ghosts of Versailles* was suggested by *La Mère coupable* ("The Guilty Mother"), the third part (1789-90) of the French playwright Beaumarchais's Figaro trilogy, the first two parts of which are now world-famous in their operatic incarnations as Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. *La Mère coupable* is about two illegitimate offspring: Léon, the son of Cherubino and Rosina, and Florestine, the daughter of Count Almaviva and an unknown lady. The Count wishes to keep Léon from winning Florestine, preferring to give her instead to the villain Bégearss; the situation is saved by the intervention of Figaro, and in the end true love, just barely, wins.

For *Ghosts*, Hoffman superimposes a second play on the original of Beaumarchais: in this more weighty addition, the ghost of Beaumarchais himself falls in love with the equally ghostly French queen, Marie Antoinette, whom he calls "Antonia." Bégearss is now an agent of the French Revolution, and desires to marry Florestine and send her family to the guillotine. Figaro and Susanna attempt to resist Bégearss, but Figaro, in an access of republican political virtue, does not want to save Marie Antoinette. Beaumarchais now attempts to change Figaro's mind by restaging the queen's trial, at which she was railroaded to her death. Bégearss is defeated and the Almaviva group escapes, but Marie Antoinette chooses to face her destiny, and once again goes to the guillotine, serenaded in death with the *Marseillaise* by the bloodthirsty crowd of "citizens" inspired by the Revolution; in recompense, she is united with Beaumarchais in Paradise.[1]

The entire opera is thus a melding of three worlds: in the words of Hoffman in the published libretto, "The world of eternity, inhabited by ghosts, . . . the world of the stage, peopled by dramatic characters, . . . [and] the world of history, populated by mortals." Here, too, sometimes buried and often confused by intricacies of the original Beaumarchais combined with the even more complicated Hoffman, are two stories: a familiar one of young love and a less familiar one—at least in our liberal times—of the wretchedness and brutality of revolution. Bégearss is a murderous thug. Marie Antoinette is a sorrowing woman, aware of her faults, but nonetheless capable of love; so affectionate a portrayal of Marie Antoinette can hardly have been equaled since Edmund Burke's threnody to the unhappy queen in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Her last words in the opera, as she confesses her love for Beaumarchais, show her in a hitherto unimaginably favorable light, and in so doing expose all the cruelty of political murder.

IF HOFFMAN had confined himself to the opposition between love and revolution, he might have produced a marvelous libretto. Alas, however, there is much more here than love and revolution: there is the whole world once called *buffo* and now, I am afraid, simply called camp. In *Ghosts*, the height of the *buffo* element is the Turkish scene—actually a reception for the British ambassador at the Turkish embassy in Paris—at the end of Act I. This was required (or so an interview with Hoffman in *Opera News* tells us) by Corigliano. As Hoffman puts it in the interview:

> We were doing an opera suggested by an 18th-century play, and all music written in the 18th century, as far as John knew, had Turkish scenes in it. He had to have it. I very blithely said yes, but it took me a year to figure it out.

Aside from the accuracy of Corigliano's understanding of "all music written in the 18th century," and Hoffman's difficulty in implementing his composer's request, the results, as performed by the Egyptian singer Samira, are pure farce:

> I am in a valley and you are in a valley.
> I have no she- or he-camel in it.
> In every house there is a cesspool.
> That's life.

I am quite aware that the combination of *buffo* and tragedy is a staple—to cite merely the most famous case—of the greatest operas of Mozart. *Così fan tutte*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and even *The Magic Flute* all contain ridiculous as well as deeply moving elements. And so, too, do Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. It is possible to view this combination of antithetical elements as providing a higher dialectical synthesis, and in this way more closely approximating life, which as we know hardly shows itself to us in a consistent way; it is also possible to say that librettos so marked by the inclusion of opposites throw an even heavier burden on the composer than he might otherwise have to bear. And so the ultimate responsibility for *The Ghosts of Versailles*, as always in opera, ends up with the composer.

BUT before I discuss Corigliano's music, a word must be spared for

[1] The foregoing summary of *The Ghosts of Versailles* is based on the "Brief Synopsis" of the opera contained in the Metropolitan Opera program book.

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Colin Graham's production of the work. As is so often the case in these days of poor singing and loss of confidence in the ability of the artwork itself to triumph, the production was an extravaganza. Remarkably for an opera set in Marie Antoinette's tiny theater at the Petit Trianon, the entire dimensions of the Met's cavernous stage were used. Characters flying in from the vast spaces at the top of the stage; backdrops of immense staircases mounting what seemed like hundreds of feet into the stratosphere; huge false-front buildings being pushed around as if they were weightless; the Almavivas escaping at the end of the opera in a hot-air balloon swung across the back of the stage; a chorus of revolutionaries; a giant representation of a Turkish Pasha singing at the end of Act I out of a mouth seemingly a foot wide, and finally erupting with a flash of fireworks from his enormous turbanned head; and, rather more sinisterly, a vivid representation of a sadomasochistic orgy with the villain Bégearss tyrannizing his young servant Wilhelm with a riding crop.

Everything, as they say in the theater world, "worked"; in other words, everything successfully called attention to itself, taking the maximum amount of attention away from the music. If it was the Met's intention to compete with such London/Broadway musicals as *Cats*, *Les Misérables*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*, it certainly succeeded.

ULTIMATELY, though, it was with Corigliano's music that *The Ghosts of Versailles* failed. Genius, it is sometimes said, will out: faced with a clumsy libretto, a poor production, even a bad era for the writing of music, a genius will find a way to transmute difficulties into art. But there is little in Corigliano's past career to suggest that he possesses the incandescence that triumphs over every contextual adversity. Long before his "AIDS" symphony (my title, not his), Corigliano's first claim to fame was in the composition of music pleasant enough to be accepted by mainstream audiences, and just spicy enough to avoid the charge of reaction so damaging to traditionally minded composers; an example is his *Tournaments Overture* (1965).[2] Here the music is mildly dissonant, jaunty, tuneful, and rich, but overall more rich than tuneful; the orchestral scoring is effective, in the sense of giving each section something "important" to do. The whole effect of *Tournaments* is of movie music, vaguely American in melody but nevertheless eclectic, written to complement a nonexistent film.

In contrast, Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto (1977), though still melodically American, seems to have lost the quality of idle joy. Much of it is very noisy and frighteningly busy, but much also seems lost in thought, and perhaps for that very reason the work makes a rather sober impression, even in the fast and furious passages of the first and last movements.

The "AIDS" symphony, written more than a decade later, quite naturally displays neither the jauntiness of the *Tournaments Overture* nor the sobriety of the Clarinet Concerto. Instead, it substitutes a sonic rage full of jagged dissonance, funereal outbursts, evocations of insanity, and disheartened dirges; what had been joyously or soberly American in melody and action before has now been discarded in the angry service of mourning.[3] The intensity of emotion results in a portrayal of AIDS as a universal cataclysm, a holocaust of our time.

This Corigliano composition stands largely in an earlier tradition of American symphonism, the tradition of lonely grandeur; it evokes the atmosphere of William Schuman's Symphony no. 9 (1968), subtitled "The Ardeatine Caves," written to commemorate Nazi atrocities against Italians, Jew and Christian alike.[4] If Schuman (born 1910) has written a work that is finer and more satisfying than the Corigliano, it is not necessarily because of a greater sincerity of feeling, but because of Schuman's ability—now gone, it seems, from American composers—to employ, with magnificent self-control, a fully integrated musical style, rather than the cafeteria style (including a quotation from a tango by the Spanish composer Albéniz) so tempting to Corigliano, and for which he is so much admired.

THIS by now fully-developed cafeteria style is perhaps the first problem one notices in listening to *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Here there is no longer anything of the solid bedrock of American symphonism. The music runs the full stylistic gamut, backward, from the electronic sounds of Darmstadt in the 1960's to the melodies of conventional late-19th-century grand opera and late-18th-century musical slapstick; there is much suggestion of Mozart, including an adaptation of the first two bars of "*Voi che sapete*" ("You who know"), Cherubino's aria from *The Marriage of Figaro*. Similarly, the musical techniques include traditional writing for a full orchestra, along with synthesizer sounds and such avant-garde devices as unsynchronized writing for orchestra and voices. But whatever the musical means which Corigliano chooses to employ at any particular moment, his music often sounds as if it has been written not to set the words, not to enhance them, but merely to occupy the same space in time. Especially in Act I, there are great stretches of *parlando* writing, a kind of musical declamation, in which many words in a row are sung on the same note, thus attempting to serve a quasi-melodic function.

For example, Figaro's patter song in the middle of Act I is a damp squib modeled both on Figaro's "*Largo al factotum*" in *The Barber of Seville* and on Leporello's catalogue aria in *Don Giovanni*. But unlike the models, Corigliano's version is slow in pace, and not half so witty and amusing as a

[2] An LP recording, which I have not heard, of the *Tournaments Overture* was available on Louisville 771. I have heard the work on a Chicago Symphony broadcast from its 1985 European tour.

[3] The Corigliano Symphony has been recorded by Daniel Barenboim, conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It is available on Erato CD 2292-45601-2.

[4] The Schuman Symphony was first available in the 1970's on an RCA LP, with Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, as RCA LSC-3212. More recently, it was available on CRI LP SD 477.

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similar tour de force in another work perhaps derived, however distantly, from Beaumarchais: the comic opera *Der Barbier von Bagdad* (1858) by the now-forgotten German composer Peter Cornelius.[5]

The next major event in *Ghosts* after Figaro's aria is the "Aria of the Worm" of Bégearss, based on a poem written by the late-19th-century composer (and librettist for Verdi), Arrigo Boito. The music for this statement of the eternality of the worm, and by implication of evil, completely lacks the vitality of Iago's functionally similar "*Credo*" in Verdi's *Otello* (also to words by Boito, after Shakespeare). Just as important, Corigliano's formulaic and lumpish music for Bégearss also lacks the symphonic originality and power of Verdi's for Iago; as a result, what is universally evil in Iago becomes merely sadistic, at once disgusting and forgettable, in Bégearss.

The Turkish scene at the end of Act I is on one level, of course, a send-up of 18th-century operatic convention. But it must be remembered that those musical evocations, for all their humor in tune and story, were based on the bitter memory of just how far the Turks actually did get into Europe in the 17th century. In *Ghosts*, this bitter memory has disappeared, and all the mock-Oriental sounds are merely an excuse by which the production can vamp the audience with spectacle and farce. The music itself, including a horrendously out-of-tune and otherwise deformed rendition of "God Save the King" by the "Turkish" musicians, remains prevailingly slow-moving, and when not slow-moving, relentlessly iterative. Even the hoped-for showstopper, Samira's lament, seems more languishing than languorous.

BEFORE *Ghosts* was actually premiered, the talk coming from those who had seen the work's score and heard the rehearsal tape (made by singers with the orchestra parts performed on a synthesizer) discounted Act I for its all-too-obvious lack of musical vitality and invention. But Act II, so the talk went, was on an altogether higher level—moving, melodic, and operatic in the best sense. Certainly the libretto, with its emphasis on the love of Beaumarchais and Marie Antoinette and the tragedy of her frame-up, might well have supported the writing of such fine music. In the event—and aside from the omnipresent invocation of Mozart—little could be heard from orchestra and singers alike but a pointless straining after climaxes and the kind of nostalgic longing for a perfect past that was brought into contemporary music by the *Alice* compositions, based on Lewis Carroll, of David Del Tredici.

In Act II were all the trappings of grand opera, including elevated sentiments and ensembles galore. Lacking only were melodies with the capacity to move an audience and remain in the listener's heart and mind. Here are Hoffman's lofty words for Beaumarchais, describing a future life with Marie Antoinette as if the Revolution had never taken place:

> Vast theaters play our visions,
> Salons ring with unheard-of sounds.
> And there are new fabrics,
> Dyed inconceivable colors,
> And new kinds of roses, tulips, orchids,
> And new industries,
> Powered by wind, water, sunlight!
> And new sciences—
> Mesmerism, magnetism, electricity!
> And Antonia lives!

Corigliano can manage nothing with this other than his usual *parlando* settings, and the orchestra contributes only unfocused and apparently random noises. When in a duet between Rosina and Susanna, some melodies seem about to emerge, the snail's pace robs them of any effect. A quintet with Florestine, Rosina, Susanna, Léon, and Almaviva, which later becomes a sextet with the addition of Marie Antoinette, hardly has any forward momentum at all, and its melody is merely an outward convention, with no outpouring of feeling. Finally, in Corigliano's setting for the moving final words of Marie Antoinette, all pretense at melody flees, and we are left with the mere manner, rather than the content, of song; the highest requirement of opera, that at the climactic moment the music subsume the words, and so replace them, remains totally unsatisfied. Here is all the style of grand opera, and precious little of the substance.

It seems to me that Corigliano's music fails in more than its thinness, its lack of distinctiveness and memorability; it also fails adequately to differentiate among specific characters. There is fast music and slow music, loud music and soft music, busy music and static music. But with the exception of the villain Bégearss, whose music (as in the Worm aria) has a certain crude force, the characters sing what might be called plugged-in, or prefabricated, music.

As a result of Corigliano's deficiencies in musical portraiture, I did not come away from the performance of the opera (I attended the opening) with very strong feelings about the contributions of the performers. The two exceptions were the tenor Graham Clark, as Bégearss, who did give a powerful impression of a sadomasochistic brute; and the mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne, who has always been counted a highly serious artist but who drew from her camp role as the Egyptian singer every drop of farce and foolishness. The singers' English diction was as clear as could have been expected; and they struggled heroically to sing the notes musically, even when the notes were, as was often the case, unsupported by the orchestra.

THE success of *Ghosts* with the largely partisan audience was extraordinary. At the premiere, the cheering, both for the composer and for Marilyn Horne in her comic role, was deafening. Part of

[5] Cornelius's enchanting and unjustly ignored opera was available some years ago in an excellent LP recording conducted by Erich Leinsdorf and with Oskar Czerwenka in the title role; my copy is on EMI Electrola 1C 147-01 448/9. For the full flavor of the great patter aria in the Cornelius, however, it is necessary to hear the virtuoso performance by the German bass Georg Hann (1897-1950); it was available some 40 years ago on a long-playing 78 RPM recording, Deutsche Grammophon 72012.

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this response was no doubt due to the work's appeal to the special taste for stage business and spectacle so characteristic of today's opera-lovers. In contrast to the audience reaction, the press reviews have been mixed, though with few exceptions upbeat: a rave in *Newsweek*, a semi-rave in *Time*, an ambivalent review in the New York *Times*, and a generally unfavorable one in *New York*. The most praise has come for the production, and the most criticism for the music; the review in *Time* captures this split quite well:

> If the audience at *Ghosts* . . . wearies of the attenuated, ectoplasmic string sounds that emanate rather too frequently from the pit, there is always something to watch onstage. This show never quits.

Curiously, and despite the clear evidence of the written words, the general impression is that the reviews of *Ghosts* have been marvelous. It is as if everyone with a stake in music and opera has decided to put the best face on everything connected with this work: the audience came to the premiere prepared to like it, the reviewers were mostly gentle with their reservations, and operagoers, no less than readers, are now convinced that *Ghosts* is a hit.

How is one to explain this? The answer, I think, is simple, albeit disquieting. *The Ghosts of Versailles* was from its inception widely perceived as the last hope for new American opera, and indeed for new opera in general. It is now realized that, for all the hoopla over them, Philip Glass's opera-tableaux and John Adams's political tracts have fallen flat, and so has any remaining interest in new European opera. (Glass and Adams will no doubt be performed for a few years more, because the production pipeline is long and its contents move sluggishly. The Met, for instance, will soon be doing a Glass work on Christopher Columbus.) But Corigliano, unlike the minimalists Glass and Adams, is a "real" composer, and the Met is by far our greatest opera company; if together they cannot produce a lasting success, who can? Just because the audience for opera—and the enormous apparatus responsible for producing opera—is so highly invested in it as an art form, the verdict on *Ghosts* just *had* to be favorable. As several people in the opera world indicated to me after the premiere, "If this thing succeeds, there will be other American operas to follow—and maybe some of them will really be good. If *Ghosts* fails, that's the end."

If, however, as I believe, *The Ghosts of Versailles* is indeed a failure, is this failure the end of the search for American opera, or for new opera in general? The answer to that question depends on the condition not so much of American opera as of American music. It cannot be too often repeated that opera depends on music, and that attempts to make up for musical insufficiency by theatrical artifice and dramatic ingenuity, though they may distract viewers, will not in any long-range sense change their minds.

The great years of American music—from the 1930's to the early 1950's, the years of the maturing of Aaron Copland, Walter Piston, David Diamond, and William Schuman, to name only four—were years of symphonic, not operatic, composition. Were serious American music once again to flower, and were it to turn its attentions to grand opera, there would almost certainly be new American works that we might claim with pride. In the meantime, we do wrong to wallow in self-deception and blind hope.

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To the 21st Century

THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN. By FRANCIS FUKUYAMA. *The Free Press. 418 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by PAUL JOHNSON

EDUCATED people have an extraordinary appetite for absolute answers to historical questions, answers which wise historians know cannot be forthcoming. It is astonishing that Hegel's reputation survived his absurd declaration that history had ended with Bonaparte's victory over Prussia at Jena in 1806. Yet Hegel went on to hold what was then the most enviable academic post in Germany, the chair of philosophy in Berlin, and to write much more clever and influential nonsense. In due course his thoughts were transmuted by Marx not merely into a set of absolute answers about where history was heading but into a program for accelerating the process. Until recently this moonshine was believed by millions of comparatively well-educated people, and indeed there remain corners of university campuses where it is still upheld and taught.

There was a time, too, especially in the 1920's, when Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* was the ultra-fashionable text for historical determinists, and that was succeeded, a decade or so later, by Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*. It sold in prodigious quantities, despite its offputting length, and I am old enough to remember a time when it was still taken seriously, even though Toynbee changed his entire theory fundamentally, halfway through it.

The latest intellectual entrepreneur to supply the appetite is Francis Fukuyama, whose 1989 article, "The End of History?," with its notion that the collapse of Soviet Communism had opened the era of total liberal triumph and brought history to a stop, was a sensation in the United States and elsewhere, and so got the 1990's off to a thoroughly muddled start. No doubt anxious to consolidate his perhaps fragile reputation as the guru of the decade, he has now produced a volume of 400 pages which says the last word on—well, everything, more or less.

Fukuyama here restates his original contention in less exalted, and therefore more acceptable, terms than in his original essay:

> As mankind approaches the end of the millennium, the twin crises of authoritarianism and socialist central planning have left only one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potentially universal validity: liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty.

This proposition is, at any rate, worth debating. The only trouble is that its assumption of the imminent triumph of liberalism was a 19th-century commonplace, shared alike by John Stuart Mill and Woodrow Wilson, Mazzini and Kossuth, Gladstone and Thiers; indeed, it was pretty generally held, among "enlightened" people, as late as the Versailles Conference in 1918-19. Unfortunately, such complacency was succeeded by the totalitarian era, from which we are only just beginning, rather tentatively I would say, to emerge. Even in its watered-down form, Fukuyama's optimism appears presumptuous.

Moreover, it gets him only as far as page 42, and he still has more than 350 pages to fill. Fukuyama is himself a Hegelian, and the thoughts of the Master keep popping up in his text, rather as King Charles's head intrudes into the memorandum which Mr. Dick, in *David Copperfield*, is writing to the Lord Chancellor. To make matters worse, Fukuyama is also bedazzled by a now-obscure French philosophy expert, Alexandre Kojève, here described as "Hegel's great interpreter," and he too keeps popping up, behind and sometimes in front of Hegel, rather like Sancho Panza squiring Don Quixote.

As I say, the book goes on to cover a lot of ground, and the author enjoys conjuring up fancy chapter headings, such as "The Mechanism of Desire," "The Beast with Red Cheeks," and "The Coldest of All Cold Monsters." But these promise more than they perform, and much of the book is anodyne in effect, ranging through conventional poli. sci. to standard futurology, with a tendency to waffle at critical points. Perhaps the fairest comment I can make is to recall the exchange between the High Court Judge and the sharp-tongued barrister F.E. Smith. Judge: "I have listened carefully to your exposition, Mr. Smith, and I am none the wiser." "Possibly not, my lord, but considerably better informed."

Alas, "considerably" would be out of place here: Fukuyama does not deal widely in facts, and the key table he presents, "Liberal Democracies Worldwide," tracing their increase through the years 1790, 1848, 1900, 1919, 1940, 1960, 1975, and 1990 seems to me a minefield of misunderstandings, both historical and contemporary. In the bound reviewers' galleys of this book, Yugoslavia was rated as a "liberal democracy"—that country riven by half-a-dozen civil wars, with a million homeless refugees, its rump still run by a heartless Communist dictatorship; in the nick of time, the listing was removed from the final published version. But is it right to call Romania a "liberal democracy"? Or Paraguay? Or genocidal Sri Lanka? There are a dozen other countries Fukuyama complacently lists in his "end of history" column which do not belong there.

THE truth is that though Fukuyama repeatedly refers to "the recent worldwide liberal revolution," it is

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at present one of aspiration rather than reality. What is true is that, for the first time in history, every single nation in Western Europe is now, theoretically at least, a democracy under the rule of law, and there has been a strong movement toward political and economic freedom in Eastern Europe, too. But with some exceptions, much the same could have been said of Europe in 1918-19, and look what followed.

Even in Western Europe, the credentials of some countries need examination. In France, for instance, the ability of citizens, either as individuals or through their puny parliament, to resist the overweening power of the state is minute—though perhaps Fukuyama, as a Hegelian, and so a state-worshipper, would approve of that. In Italy, only last year, the special anti-Mafia prosecutor told parliament in despair: "Whole provinces of Italy and Sicily are now beyond the law." Moreover, as Britain, where liberalism originated and which has been a country under the rule of law since at least the mid-17th century, is discovering to its cost, the European Community is slowly enmeshing twelve nations in a labyrinth of bureaucratic regulations which is profoundly undemocratic and illiberal.

ELSEWHERE, the outlook is much darker. The likelihood of working democracies, where all are equal under the law, emerging in any part of the Muslim world is not great, and Fukuyama's listing of Turkey as a "liberal democracy" seems to me quite false, as the author would discover for himself if he went there in the guise of a Kurd or an Armenian. The only successful democracy in the Arab world was Lebanon—it worked well when I first visited it in the 1950's—and it was so by virtue of its Christian majority, which has since vanished, along with democracy and law. The first free elections ever held in "liberated" Algeria, after 30 years, produced an overwhelming first-round victory for Islamic theocracy—the negation of liberal democracy—at which point the experiment was aborted.

The one liberal democracy in the African continent, the Republic of South Africa, has a parliamentary democracy, albeit limited to the white race, and a rule of law which extends to all; it is now threatened by black power under an unreconstructed Stalinist-type party. There *are* democratic stirrings in Africa, after a long night of Marxist and collectivist failure, but they are no more than stirrings.

In South America (if not in Central America), the skies are a little lighter, at any rate for the present, though that part of the world specializes in false dawns. And it must be pointed out, as Fukuyama half-admits, that the present wave of economic liberalism is almost entirely due to the success of the seventeen-year military dictatorship of General Pinochet in Chile. The freeing of what had been an economy strangled by collectivist regimentation and bureaucracy could only have been achieved by a masterful man of his stamp, able to do as much as he pleased by virtue of his bayonets. And, though many neighboring countries currently going through a democratic, parliamentary phase—such as Argentina—have taken courage to follow suit, it remains to be seen whether their governments have the stamina to go on with it. In the Latin American context, I fear, democracy and economic liberalism tend to be mutually exclusive, a point not lost on that wise old Pole, Joseph Conrad (cf. *Nostromo*).

As for Asia, who will be bold enough to predict the political future of the three key peoples, the Japanese, the Indians, and the Chinese? Believing, as I do, that political freedom and economic freedom are ultimately indivisible, and that if you embark on one the other must eventually follow suit, I assume that if the Beijing regime reverts to its program of commercial liberalization, as it seems inclined to do, moves toward political democracy must follow. But I would not bet one Kuomintang dollar on it. Again, India has now practiced a form of democracy—by no means a liberal form, despite what Fukuyama's table states—for nearly half a century, thanks to a useful foundation of British institutions. But its survival, amid all the stresses of race, region, and religion, is a kind of daily miracle, a gift from God.

Then there is Japan, another half-century-old democracy. Fukuyama classifies it as a liberal one, and so in certain technical respects it may be; but in other, much more important respects, it is not, or not yet. To me, Japan is the most elusive and impenetrable nation on earth, which in some ways has more in common with the Middle Kingdom of ancient Egypt than anything in contemporary society. Far more than Stalin's Russia, it fits Churchill's description, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Japan, so far, has clung to democracy because it is convenient, and safe, and has proved mighty profitable. If these conditions should change, will Japan, a country with a large and now-affluent population and few natural resources, look elsewhere for political salvation? Has democracy, let alone liberalism, struck deep, self-sustaining roots in Japanese civic habits and attitudes? How can we possibly say? The Japanese, or so many of them tell me, do not even know themselves; or if they do know, are not saying.

THIS *tour d'horizon* leaves out North America, and the United States in particular. Fukuyama assumes that America is intrinsically and incorrigibly liberal-democratic, the *fons et origo* of the concept. Of the 64 countries in his table, it is the only one to score full marks all the way through from 1790 to 1990. Yet because a state may formally qualify for the status of a liberal democracy, it does not follow that all its inhabitants enjoy the benefits. Can we say a society is democratic if democracy is not in fact practiced, or is under the rule of law if law is not, in reality, available?

One problem Fukuyama does not consider is the way in which liberal democracy, or liberalism *tout court*, breeds its own nemesis. Let us take an illustration from a recent examination of the state of the U.S. economy, *The Great Reckoning*, by J.D. Davidson and William Rees-Mogg. They cite Dodge

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City in 1871 as an example of a primitive, pre-civil society, without representative government, police, courts, or justice of any kind. Its murder rate was, accordingly, high. But it was only half, per capita, of the murder rate in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, in 1990. In large parts of Washington today, fewer than one in ten adults vote; one person in sixteen will be murdered over a life-span, and among children under twelve murder is now the leading cause of death. To a lesser degree, such conditions apply to portions of other major cities in the richest, most democratic, and most liberal country on earth. To someone in a U.S. ghetto, or for that matter in a big-city housing complex in Britain or France, the consequences of liberalism may themselves be a tyranny, and life for many is liable to be, in Hobbes's words, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

History does not end; it simply becomes more complicated. Whereas capitalism, judged by its historical performance over two centuries, is a self-correcting system, being a form of economic activity which tends to occur at a certain stage in human development unless you do something specific to stop it, liberalism is an intellectual concept which to some extent has to be imposed on societies by its better-educated elites: no large democracy, for instance, has ever abolished capital punishment by referendum. That, of course, is why liberalism tends to be self-defeating—because it often runs across the grain of popular sentiment, based on harsh experience. Similarly, such concepts as racial equality and nondiscrimination, buttressed as they usually are by practical measures like quotas, busing, and positive law, are imposed by elected elites, often responding to pressure groups or "expert opinion" rather than being demanded by mass opinion.

Ordinary men and women favor freedom of speech and movement; all want the right to sell their labor in the highest market, to spend their money as they please; they welcome the right to vote, and most support freedom of the press, and

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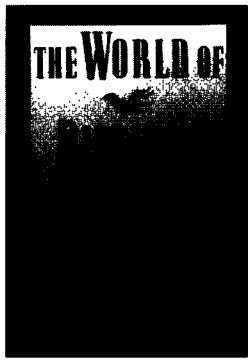

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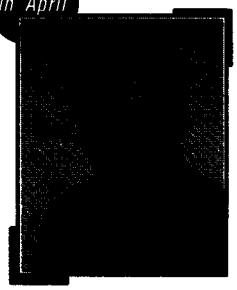

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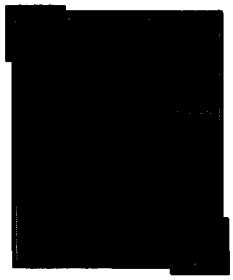
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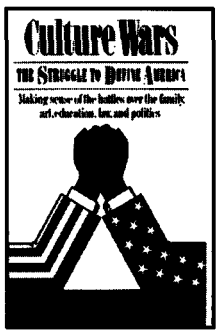

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even religion. But the more sophisticated forms of liberalism are less popular, and some are downright unpopular. If countries like the United States and Britain had government by referendum—something which is now technically possible on a day-to-day basis—they would become radically less liberal in a short time. Over a huge range of issues, from what is taught in the schools and how, to the treatment of criminal offenders, public opinion, so far as one can see, would insist on a harder, harsher society, but also one which would become more industrious, and safe. Such are the orders of human priorities in the mass.

In short, it is not only in South America that there tends to be a conflict between democracy and liberalism. In fact, "liberal democracy" is to some extent a contradiction in terms. The more democratic it is, the less liberal; and vice versa. I cannot, for instance, honestly call Britain a democracy, though it is certainly a liberal-led society. There, 30 years ago, capital punishment—an issue on which virtually every adult has, and is entitled to have, strong opinions—was abolished, not indeed by referendum but by parliamentary vote. On the evidence of polls, public opinion has continued to demand its return, usually by majorities of 80 percent; parliament has continued to ban it, by almost equally large majorities.

It occurs to me, then—and it is the sort of point which Fukuyama, were he not such a blinkered Hegelian, might have considered—that over the next twenty years or so, the advanced societies will move further in the direction of liberalism, or will become more democratic; but not both. I foresee all kinds of tensions developing, as our cities grow richer, more violent, more hedonistic, and, if not more liberal, then more libertarian, and our countrysides (therefore) more threatened. As history grows in complexity, it becomes more fascinating, as well as more difficult to predict. *Pace* Fukuyama, we face new nightmares in the 21st century, as well as realized dreams, and the really disturbing prospect is that they will be nightmares of a kind we have never before experienced.

Insider Journalism

DEN OF THIEVES. By JAMES B. STEWART. *Simon & Schuster. 493 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

FOLLOWING Ivan Boesky's guilty plea to insider trading in November 1986, articles began to appear in the *Wall Street Journal* under the bylines of James B. Stewart and Daniel Hertzberg which, over the next several years, created the impression of rampant criminality on Wall Street. Arming themselves with over 300 citations from unnamed government sources ("according to people familiar with the government's investigation," etc.), the reporters told of what Stewart would later call "the greatest criminal conspiracy the financial world has ever known." Readers learned that a wide-ranging investigation was under way of an illegal scheme of insider trading, involving scores of people and aimed at profiting hugely from corporate takeovers. The investigation was proceeding with the aid of Boesky himself, who had agreed to have his phones tapped and to be wired for sound.

On December 5, 1986, Stewart and Hertzberg reported:

> As government investigators continue to pursue the biggest insider-trading case in history, a major theme is emerging: in every instance known thus far to figure in the government's investigation, the securities firm of Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc. played an important role and Ivan F. Boesky amassed stock positions in advance of significant news announcements.

On April 28, 1987, they wrote:

> Government investigators have unearthed substantial evidence to support charges of criminal violations of securities laws by Michael R. Milken and Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc. . . . At the heart of any case against Milken and Drexel is the testimony of Mr. Boesky.

The pursuit of "junk-bond king" Michael Milken was under way.

Over the next two years the reporters, joined by Laurie Cohen after Stewart became the *Journal*'s page-one editor in September 1988, duly channeled to their readers an incessant flood of leaks, all aimed at pummeling Milken, destroying his reputation, and frightening everyone involved with him. In March 1989, Milken was finally indicted on 98 counts of securities fraud and racketeering. As Milken continued to resist, hints were leaked of an expanded, "superseding indictment," which, apparently, never existed.

AFTER years of such high drama devoted to the pursuit and capture of, supposedly, the greatest financial criminal in history, anyone who followed the case to its conclusion must have been greatly puzzled. Although Milken eventually drew a stiff ten-year sentence, the six picayune crimes to which he pled guilty were not even part of the 98-count indictment. Five of the six were technical violations, which derived their appearance of criminality from being linked in the sixth plea of "conspiracy."

Conspiracy has a heavy sound, but the violations to which Milken entered his plea were of no material consequence and were not logically related to any conspiracy. *None* of the violations involved insider trading, stock manipulation, bribery, or racketeering. Milken pled to three securities-law violations, one mail fraud, and one tax count, and even these were nowhere near as serious as they sounded.

Two of the three securities-law violations involved Milken's promises to cover losses if Boesky bought specific stocks and they declined in value. In one case, involving the purchase of Fischbach common stock, Boesky did not report in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) his understanding that Milken had

PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS, *a former associate editor and columnist for the* Wall Street Journal, *and a former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, now holds the William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.*

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promised to cover such losses. In the other, involving the purchase of MCA stock, Milken's promise to cover losses was not recorded on Drexel's books.

In the former case, it could be construed that Milken was helping a takeover attempt of Fischbach by Victor Posner. But Posner did take the company over, apparently legally, so in context the violation was technical and immaterial; moreover, it was committed by Boesky, not by Milken, who pled only to "aiding and abetting." In the latter case, Drexel may or may not have violated some accounting or reporting rule, but if manipulation was intended it failed, because the price of the stock declined. Neither of these episodes supports the image of a man making a fortune through "financial crime."

The third securities-law violation was an act of stock "parking." Boesky sold Helmerich & Payne common stock to Drexel with a promise to buy it back, covering any losses. This gave Boesky cash with which to overstate his net capital, as reported to the SEC. Again, this was of no material consequence, and no one was defrauded of any money. Moreover, Milken did not arrange the stock parking, but later, when he learned of it, permitted the stock to be resold to Boesky. On this weak reed, Milken pled that he had "aided and abetted" Boesky's overstatement of his net capital.

The mail-fraud plea stemmed from a "failure to disclose," in invoices mailed to David Solomon, manager of the Finsbury Fund, a legal agreement Milken had made with Solomon to adjust by a fraction of a point within the bid/ask range the fund's purchase and sale of high-yield bonds, in order to cover the commissions Drexel paid to representatives who sold the fund. In this case, had Drexel used Federal Express or hand-delivered its invoices to Solomon, instead of sending them through the U.S. mails, Milken would not have committed a "crime." Drexel was under no obligation to pay the cost of marketing the fund, and in any event it was Solomon, not Milken, who had the duty of disclosure to the fund's shareholders. Drexel's

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transactions with the Finsbury Fund, moreover, were relatively few: Judge Kimba Wood, who sentenced Milken, was able to substantiate only $318,082 in undisclosed charges—again, hardly the foundation of a multibillion-dollar fortune.

Finally, Milken pled guilty to assisting David Solomon in filing a "false" personal income-tax return. In what appears to be a normal and widely practiced method of shifting tax liability from one year to another, Solomon had sold stock at a loss in one year and recovered his money in a profitable transaction in the next.

ONE has to wonder about the competence of federal prosecutors, having spent several years amassing a highly publicized 98-count indictment of the putative leader of the greatest financial conspiracy in history, who would then accept such a paltry plea bargain. Judge Wood must have wondered, too. She called a special sentencing ("Fatico") hearing in order to allow the government to present its strongest counts against Milken (apart from those he had already pled guilty to). Reaching deep into its arsenal of insider-trading, racketeering, bribery, and stock-manipulation charges, and armed with the advantages of a lower burden of proof and lower evidentiary hurdles than in a genuine trial, the government still failed to convince the judge that Milken's crimes exceeded his plea. (The sentence she proceeded to impose left legal commentators shocked.) As for Boesky, by the time of the hearing he had proved to be such an unreliable witness that the government did not dare call him to testify. The entire Boesky-related case of insider trading and racketeering had evaporated.

One has to wonder, too, about the competence or the integrity of a reporter who, in 1991, after all these events had become known, would publish a book that provides no explanation of the vast difference between the 98-count indictment and the picayune six-count plea. Instead, in *Den of Thieves*—which takes its title from the passage in the New Testament where Jesus cleanses the Temple of the Jewish moneychangers—James B. Stewart retells the Milken story in terms of the same unsubstantiated leaks that made up the 98-count indictment which the prosecutors lacked the confidence to take to trial. Having been used as a conduit by the prosecutors, Stewart now assumes that the leaks planted on him were true. He writes his account in the form of a historical novel, affecting to know what was going through the minds of the protagonists as the purported events unfolded, as well as what was spoken by the parties when no witness was present. Milken's every word and action he interprets, naturally, in the worst possible light, as expressions of greed and megalomania.

In his prologue, Stewart writes that Milken's "crimes were far more complex, imaginative, and ambitious than mere insider trading." Yet Stewart's own understanding of high finance amounts to this: a bunch of crooks used a fraudulent financial instrument to steal money from trusting investors. Stewart sees high-yield or "junk" bonds as the instrument of a "crime wave," by means of which Milken and his cronies enriched themselves while wrecking companies that were household names, crippling others, and destroying thousands of jobs by loading companies with debt in order to reap wealth from ruin, never failing to seize an opportunity to violate "the sense of justice and fair play that is a foundation of civilized society." At the very least, this leaves unexplained today's flourishing "junk-bond" market—to say nothing of the way Milken created great value by providing financing for companies which lacked investment-grade credit ratings, and helped to forge a market for a financial instrument that allowed badly managed companies to be put into more capable hands.

STEWART claims that "this story shows how the nation's financial markets were in fact corrupted from within, and subverted for criminal purpose." Yet the reader has to make his way deep into this book before encountering much about Milken's purported wrongdoings. And even then, Stewart artfully weaves in Milken with Ivan Boesky and other figures in the Wall Street investigations like Martin Siegel and Dennis Levine. His picture of Milken is particularly dependent on the version of the alleged conspiracy given by Boesky, who in his own sentencing was under pressure from prosecutors to produce bigger fish.

Milken was a vulnerable target. He was an upstart financier stepping all over "white-shoe" Wall Street toes. He had made huge amounts of money, for himself and others, by activities the ordinary person could not understand. He struck fear in the hearts of the corporocracy, ever allergic to entrepreneurs and their risk-taking ways. U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani and SEC officials knew that Wall Street and the *Fortune* 500 would not come to Milken's defense. Neither would politicians and journalists convinced that debt was the nation's undoing.

The government used the vague securities laws, and the press, especially Stewart, as instruments of terror. The aim was to convince Milken's associates to help the government build a case against him; in exchange, they themselves would escape being charged—for what, they knew not. The government also indicted Milken's younger brother Lowell, and wielded the bludgeon of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), which permits the government to seize all of a defendant's assets prior to trial.

STEWART never tells his readers that to this day the SEC has resisted defining insider trading, on the grounds that doing so would be detrimental to the enforcement of the law. Obviously, undefined crimes can be employed as a weapon against anyone; the fear of trial expenses and ruined reputations calls forth witnesses who will search anxiously for what prosecutors want to hear. The upshot, as in the case of Michael Milken, is that a defendant is forced to provide the government with a case against himself by coming forward with a plea.

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Federal indictments cannot be trusted when the ambitions of prosecutors take precedence over their concern for justice. The public cannot rely on journalists when their reporting is such a large part of the prosecution, much less when, as in Stewart's case, it is a principal instrument of the prosecution.

If I were the publisher of the *Wall Street Journal*, I would be concerned that three shoddy reporters helped overreaching prosecutors, who themselves violated the law by leaking grand-jury testimony, to send an innocent person to jail, and I would assign reporters to reopen the case and inform the public of the truth.

Generations

MOSTLY MORGENTHAUS: A FAMILY HISTORY. By HENRY MORGENTHAU III. *Ticknor & Fields. 501 pp. $27.50.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN D. SARNA

STORYBOOK histories of old-line German-Jewish families in America resemble one another to a remarkable degree. They typically begin with a pedigree, conveniently traced back to some well-known Jewish luminary "whose works are still studied and read." From there, they turn to 19th-century Germany, where conditions are inevitably grim owing to economic discrimination and religious oppression. The hero, a young, enterprising, unmarried Jewish male, courageously resolves to abandon this Old World with its heritage of privation and anti-Jewish prejudice, and to strike out on his own for the New World, where, he has heard, opportunities abound and Jews receive the same treatment as everybody else.

Once on these shores, the new immigrant soon takes up with fellow Jews who, he happily discovers, hail from the same general area of Central Europe and are ready to extend assistance and credit. And so he trudges off to earn a living, starting as a lowly peddler and then slowly but surely working his way up the economic ladder to modest commercial prosperity. In time, he settles down, marries, starts a family. Taking advantage of opportunities during and immediately after the Civil War, he prospers. His children follow him into the business and expand it.

But with the onset of prosperity, moral and religious decline begins to set in. Members of the next generation, having grown up with all of the comforts of wealth, resent the pressures of the family business. Many come to resent their Judaism, too, and seek to escape it. As the story ends, in the fourth or fifth generation, the business has merged or has been sold, and the family's descendants have ceased to be Jewish.

Mostly Morgenthaus, the latest and one of the most interesting examples of this genre, dissents from the storybook version of events in numerous ways. It is not only that the details fail to conform to pattern; it is the sense of inevitable decline and assimilation that turns out to be wrong. Rather than illustrating tired old themes, this volume reminds us that American Jewish history is remarkably unpredictable, and surprises abound.

Henry Morgenthau III, a member of the fourth generation of Morgenthaus to dwell on American soil, springs his most important surprise in the opening paragraph of his introduction. "Early in life," he confesses,

> I sensed my parents' malaise in their Jewishness, which they mocked good-humoredly while remaining fiercely alert to attack from outsiders. In the adjustments I made over the years, I moved through stages of self-hatred, anger, assertiveness, and, eventually, acceptance leading to a positive reidentification.

JONATHAN D. SARNA *is the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, and the author of* JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888-1988 *(Jewish Publication Society).*

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This return to Judaism, what Morgenthau calls his "experience of Jewish rebirth," inspired a quest for the roots of his family's long-standing ambivalence toward its Jewishness. Why, he wondered, did his forebears, along with so many of his German-Jewish relatives in the United States, opt "to homogenize and to camouflage themselves beyond recognition"? Predictably, no definitive answer is supplied here, nor would any be expected from a book billed as "a lively, personal account of a colorful and gifted clan." But the fact that the question is even asked is sufficient to distinguish this family history from many others of its kind.

HENRY MORGENTHAU III focuses on three generations of illustrious forebears: Lazarus Morgenthau (1815-97), Henry Morgenthau (1856-1946), and Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (1891-1967). Lazarus, the orphaned child of an impoverished German cantor, made his fortune in Germany producing expensive, high-quality cigars for export to the United States. During the period when thousands of German Jews were emigrating to America for economic and religious reasons, he prospered by remaining where he was. By 1856, he had evolved from strict religious traditionalism to "extreme freedom of religious thought." A year later, his modernity and supreme devotion to the state were rewarded, first with a personal visit to his business by the Grand Duke of Baden and his family, and second with the privilege (accorded only to specially favored Jews) of the full rights of a free citizen of Mannheim. He had achieved, at least for a precious moment, the great ideal of his life: recognition both as a German and as a Jew.

But that moment soon passed. In 1862, a protectionist Civil War tariff abruptly shut down the American market for imported cigars and within four years the Morgenthau business lay in ruins. To avoid loss of face, and in the hope of starting life afresh, the family embarked for America.

Arriving in America at the advanced age of fifty, Lazarus failed to find the success and satisfaction that had been the "typical" lot of German Jews who emigrated at a younger age. Although he involved himself in the radical Reform temple of Rabbi David Einhorn, and won notice for his "lasting contribution to the art of fund-raising," he remained for the rest of his life financially embarrassed, bitter, and unhappy. He is remembered today, if at all, for one reason only: he was the father of Henry Morgenthau.

Henry, the ninth of Lazarus and Babette Morgenthau's fourteen children, was only ten years old when the family emigrated to the United States. His too was not the typical German-Jewish immigrant experience; but his success was as meteoric as any Jewish peddler's. His granddaughter, the late historian Barbara W. Tuchman, writing in COMMENTARY ("The Assimilationist Dilemma," May 1977), described what he accomplished as a very young man in the face of formidable economic adversity:

> Speedily learning English, he graduated from public high school at fourteen, entered City College for a career in law but was forced to leave before the end of his first year to help support the family by working as an errand boy at $4 a week. After clerking in a law office for four years while teaching in an adult night school at $15 a week, he put himself through Columbia Law School and was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty-one. With two [Jewish] friends he formed a law firm in 1879 when the average age of the partners was twenty-three.

Henry eventually abandoned the law, and made his fortune in real estate. He created one of America's first real-estate investment trusts, and had the foresight to acquire vacant lots adjacent to New York's sprawling subway system. But for him, as for so many other German Jews (and liberal American Protestants) of his day, money was not an end in itself. At the age of fifty, he placed half of his fortune in trust for his wife and children and resolved to devote the rest of his life to altruistic causes. "Repayment in money alone would not suffice," he explained, echoing a common Social Gospel theme. "I must pay in the form of personal service."

ALTHOUGH he never denied he was Jewish, Morgenthau was, by this time, an avowed assimilationist. Judaism to him was a matter of creed and conscience, not peoplehood, and he exercised his faith by performing good deeds rather than through ritual observances. Unsurprisingly, he felt drawn to Felix Adler's Ethical Culture movement, a de-Judaized faith that placed a premium on moral righteousness and social action. Later, he allied himself with two great apostles of Jewish social action, Rabbis Stephen S. Wise and Judah L. Magnes. Although they were Zionists and he was not, they all shared a common faith in the possibility of social betterment.

At Wise's behest, Morgenthau, in 1912, contributed heavily to the campaign of Woodrow Wilson, then a long-shot candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. He optimistically expected, when Wilson won the election, to be rewarded for his loyalty with the position of Treasury Secretary, but had to swallow his disappointment and settle instead for the traditional Jewish seat in the American diplomatic corps, the post of ambassador to Turkey (Palestine was at the time under Turkish rule). In many respects, this was Morgenthau's finest hour as a public servant, for he was able to act both as a "100-percent American" and as a publicly-affirming Jew. His grandson here proudly recounts his many achievements as ambassador, especially after the outbreak of World War I when Morgenthau used his good offices to assist those in desperate need, including starving Jews, Protestant missionaries, and persecuted Armenians (among the lives he saved were those of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, later Israel's second president, and David Ben-Gurion, its first and greatest prime minister). When Morgenthau returned home, in 1916, he received a hero's welcome from Jews and Christians alike.

IN A replay of his father's experience, however, Henry's shining hour was shortly followed by ignoble defeat. In 1917, with the as-

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sent of the administration and the tacit support of Protestant missionary leaders, he undertook a secret mission to persuade Turkey to conclude a separate peace with the Allies. The ill-conceived and badly executed mission was opposed by those—including leading Zionists and British diplomats—who sought to carve up the Ottoman empire and to place Palestine under British rule. Between the obstacles that these opponents placed in Morgenthau's path and his own indiscretions, the mission ended prematurely, and in embarrassing failure.

Henry Morgenthau III tries to put the best possible face on this fiasco. His grandfather, however, seems never to have recovered from it. From that time on, he evinced an implacable hatred for Zionism, believing that his former friends in the movement had doublecrossed him. He severed his ties with Stephen Wise, publicly attacked the Balfour Declaration, and did all in his power to thwart the Zionist dream. "We Jews of America have found America to be our Zion," he insisted. In his 1922 autobiography, he went so far as to deny the very existence of anti-Jewish discrimination in the United States, arguing that the Jew who yearned for social position had "only to cultivate his manners—there are no insurmountable discriminations here against true gentlemen." By the end of his life, in 1946, the former ambassador's self-hatred had overflowed into paranoia. "Don't have anything to do with the Jews," he warned his only son, Henry, Jr., in a final conversation. "They'll stab you in the back."

One might have expected, given this background, that Henry, Jr. would have submerged his Judaism. And so for many years he did. While he lived among Jews and married one, the closest he came to any faith at all was his faith in America. In that, as in so much else, he dutifully followed in his father's footsteps.

As a youth, Henry, Jr. suffered from a learning disability. He had the additional disadvantage of being sickly; throughout his life he was tormented by frequent migraine headaches. Despite these obstacles, and with his father's encouragement, he and his wife Elinor became deeply involved in politics, and particularly in the fortunes of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, who lived nearby and had become firm family friends. Hitching their wagon to Roosevelt's star, the Morgenthaus eventually accompanied the new President and his wife to Washington. There, Henry, Jr. came into his own, and in 1934 a grateful Roosevelt appointed him Secretary of the Treasury—the very position which Henry, Sr. had earlier sought and lost.

The story of how Henry, Jr., while serving in this position, became sensitized to the plight of Jews perishing in the Nazi death camps, and spearheaded the administration's belated efforts to rescue the surviving remnants of European Jewry, has been told many times. *Mostly Morgenthaus* adds several new details. In addition to the three non-Jewish Treasury Department lawyers who prevailed upon their boss to act, both Rabbi Wise (despite his falling out with Henry, Sr.) and Henrietta Stein Klotz, the Secretary's Jewish and pro-Zionist personal secretary, influenced him enormously. Given the information his son adduces here, Morgenthau's firm insistence that he took his principled stand "as Secretary of the Treasury and not as a Jew" rings hollow. More likely, the shock of the Holocaust, coupled with the evidence uncovered by his staff of anti-Semitism in the highest circles of government, shattered his assimilationist dreams, and moved him to act on behalf of his people.

Subsequently, Morgenthau became, in his son's words, "the avenging angel for the remnant of world Jewry." He did more than any other senior administration official in behalf of refugee aid. He advocated what became known as the "Morgenthau Plan" to punish Germany for its crimes. And most surprising of all, he became a firm Zionist—so much so that soon after he resigned from the cabinet in the wake of Roosevelt's death, he accepted the general chairmanship of the United Jewish Appeal.

Mostly Morgenthaus ends with the marriage of the author, Henry Morgenthau III, to the daughter of Orthodox Jews, refugees from Vienna. The wedding was conducted at Brandeis University, and was thoroughly traditional, overseen by three rabbis and the lay head of Boston's Orthodox Jewish community. The three children born of the marriage, their father reports, all have one thing in common: "more than a smattering of the Jewish education of which the author and his parents had been deprived."

This latter-day Jewish "rebirth" of the Morgenthau family offers a timely reminder that the doleful paradigm that condemns American Jews to inevitable generational decline is far from a proven historical law. Reality, in the Morgenthau case as in others, is much more interesting and complex, filled with surprising turns and fascinating exceptions. While no brief for complacency, this does offer a mo-

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dicum of communal hope. For in the real-life histories of America's Jewish families, as opposed to the stylized storybook ones, the final chapter can never be predicted with certainty.

Divided Self

REFLECTIONS OF AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BABY. By STEPHEN L. CARTER. *Basic Books. 356 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by HEATHER MACDONALD

Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby, by Professor Stephen L. Carter of the Yale Law School, is a book divided against itself. Carter marshals a compelling set of arguments to show how the costs to blacks of affirmative action outweigh the benefits; yet ultimately he recommends the continuation of affirmative action in colleges and professional schools. This contradiction stands as a reminder of how deeply entrenched expectations of racial entitlement have become in our society.

Despite the ambiguity, however, *Reflections*, which is written in an informal, conversational style, is an important contribution to a nascent debate within the black community. Carter has two aims: to persuade his fellow blacks that the era of affirmative action is ending and that they would be far wiser to encourage, rather than to fight, its demise; and to effect a truce in the bitter war of words being fought among blacks over preferences and other racial policies. His message is urgent: the hunt for traitors within and racists outside the black community is a misuse of energy that is leading to social stagnation. Rather than crafting elaborate arguments as to why meritocratic standards are racist, blacks should devote themselves to meeting and beating those standards, whatever their original intent.

Carter analyzes affirmative action from the point of view of its intended beneficiaries, having been one himself. Dismissing the concern over the "fairness" of preferences, as well as the question of whether affirmative action results in the lowering of standards, he asks, rather, whether blacks are really better off under an affirmative-action regime. The evidence he presents suggests that they are not. Though Carter distinguishes himself throughout this book from another black critic of affirmative action, Shelby Steele, his argument boils down to Steele's concept of "stigma": whatever gains individual blacks can make by taking advantage of racial preferences are far outweighed by the stigma that attaches to all blacks under an affirmative-action regime. Under such a regime, any black in a position of power or privilege is assumed to be the best available black for the position, rather than simply the best.

Another major flaw in affirmative action, in Carter's view, is its failure to help the most disadvantaged of the black population. Though justified on the ground of providing compensation for slavery and segregation, it is irrelevant to those who continue to suffer the most from that legacy—the inner-city poor. Invariably, the people who are in a position to take advantage of preferences in college admissions and hiring have at least a foot in the middle class.

Carter calls this situation "racial justice on the cheap." It costs society little up front simply to let into its academic and business institutions a certain number of underprepared members of a disadvantaged population, whereas to educate that population so that all its members could compete on an equal footing with the majority would require a significant commitment of resources. Carter blames American society, not the civil-rights establishment, for taking the cheap and easy route to racial justice. Yet it must be said that one does not hear much talk of improving education and school performance from mainstream black leaders, perhaps because affirmative action provides a much shorter path into positions of power, and preserves the structure of victim and oppressor.

To illustrate the way affirmative action favors the middle class, Carter presents himself as a case in point. The son of a Cornell professor and a legislative aide, he competed fiercely with other "faculty brats" during high school, and attended Stanford as an undergraduate. Yet he was admitted to Yale Law School as a member of a disadvantaged group. He recounts a discussion with a fellow law student over the propriety of such a classification. The student, sensing impending apostasy, struggled mightily to persuade Carter that he had been a victim of "institutional racism." Carter was not convinced then, and still is not convinced today. Though he has been the target of individual acts of racial hatred, racism has not disfigured his life.

IN THE 70's, awareness of the gap between the rationale for affirmative action and its practice contributed to the theory of institutional racism espoused by Carter's law-school classmate: every black has been equally disadvantaged by systemic racism and so is equally deserving of preferential treatment. In the 80's, a new solution to the problem emerged: "diversity." Affirmative action is now promoted less as a means of giving opportunities to those who would otherwise not have them than as a way of creating a diversity of "voices" in schools, the professions, and government. Its aim is not so much to help blacks as to help whites, who suffer from their lack of exposure to non-white voices.

This shift in rationale seems to overcome in one stroke all the objections traditionally offered to affirmative action. It no longer matters that recipients are not the neediest of the beneficiary group, since overcoming adversity is no longer the stated goal. The argument that affirmative action unfairly penalizes whites also loses its bite, since in this view diversity benefits whites. Most importantly, the charge that affirmative action results in a lowering of standards becomes irrelevant. In the words of an editor of the *Columbia Law Review*, "diversity is part of quality."

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Here, too, Carter takes a dissenting position. He vehemently opposes the diversity rationale for affirmative action, because it both presupposes and imposes a uniformity of black opinion. In the name of diversity in the community at large, it stifles black diversity. It makes little sense, he writes, to admit or appoint a black who is supposed to bring the black perspective to an institution unless there *is* such a perspective, and unless it differs markedly from whatever may be considered the mainstream view. Such a perspective, however, is the creation of the diversity movement, not its cause. Simply by positing its existence, one immediately silences those blacks who do not speak in that voice, a voice remarkably similar to the diversity theorists' own.

GIVEN the arguments that Carter has marshaled against affirmative action, his support for its continuation is thoroughly mystifying. In expressing that support he does not even attempt to navigate around the charges, which he himself has raised, that affirmative action helps the wrong people, or stigmatizes the entire race—he simply ignores them.

Carter offers only two reasons why schools should maintain affirmative action. The first is that "the purveying of knowledge, the reason universities exist, is a serious enterprise, and one professors should undertake joyfully, even when it isn't easy and even when there is a risk of failure." This is surely a non sequitur. Joy has little to do with racial preferences, and vice versa. And the observation that education is "a serious enterprise" would seem to militate against taking risks.

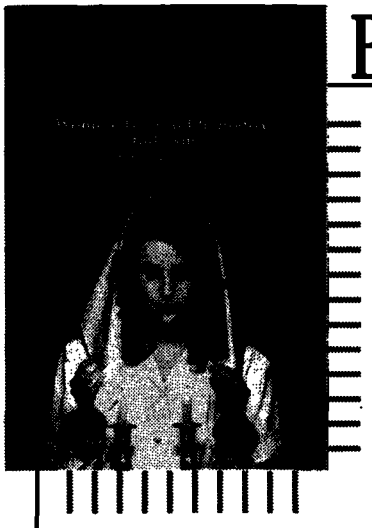
The second reason harks back to the golden age of affirmative action, when Carter himself was a student:

> The dearth of black students in colleges and professional schools . . . was understood to be a vestige of the nation's odious legacy of racist oppression. The schools, *therefore*, would reach out to bring into their student bodies highly motivated young people who might not have been admitted under the prevailing criteria but would nevertheless, if all went as planned, benefit from the opportunity for advanced training at a good school. [Emphasis added]

That "therefore" is like a rug draped over the mouth of a large pit: it covers up the lack of an explanation. Carter assumes what must be proven, namely, a connection between the history of discrimination and the duty of institutions of higher learning to compensate for that history. Even if one accepts the not unreasonable premise that the present generation has a responsibility to remedy the legacy of racism, it is not at all clear why colleges and universities should be the locus where that responsibility is discharged. From both a moral perspective and a practical one, it makes much more sense to spend tax money on creating excellent schools in the inner city than to compromise higher education.

Carter simply turns his back on the problem of how the beneficiaries of preferences perform. He relegates the issue to a footnote, where he dismisses concern about it as "bizarre." His reticence is hardly surprising. The drop-out rate for black students is near 70 percent, a fact that speaks volumes about the real, as opposed to the wished-for, effects of placing students in schools for which they are underprepared.

Carter's desire to be upbeat about black achievement leads to other blind spots in his arguments. For example, he notes a "perception" or "rumor" that "truly excellent professionals who happen not to be white" are paid higher salaries than their white counterparts. Carter is quite dubious about this "rumor," though how he could be ignorant of so pervasive a phenomenon is difficult to understand. But, he says, even if true, it is just an example of "natural" market forces exerting pressure on the price of a "more valuable commodity." This



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is a classic case of trying to have it both ways: condemning the pressure to diversify, yet treating as natural the end result of that pressure.

CARTER's message becomes clearer when he steps back from the merits of affirmative action to consider its symbolic role within the black community. Support for racial preferences, he says, has become the shibboleth of black identity: one must pronounce the proper words on affirmative action or lose one's right to call oneself black.

Carter views the suppression of dissent from civil-rights orthodoxies as inimical to black progress. At a time when the black community is desperately in need of new ideas, its leaders punish anyone who tries to provide them. "Silencing debate," Carter writes, "solves no problems; it simply limits the range of possible solutions." Yet Carter also suggests a reason for the intolerance: the enforcers of orthodoxy fear that black dissenters will be exploited by white racists, and this fear he finds wholly justifiable.

On the subject of campus speech codes, which Carter calls the "new grammar of race," he again adopts a carefully evenhanded approach. These codes, he writes, intend to "make some ideas impossible to express—unless, of course, one wants to be called a racist." He views the effort to ferret out racism in every corner of the university as misguided. But he also (rightly) castigates the defenders of free speech for their failure to condemn incidents of genuine racial harassment with anywhere near the passion with which they condemn the response to such incidents. He sees unconscious racism at work here: whites underestimate the terror caused by such incidents because they are unable to identify with its victims.

Finally, Carter articulates, but neither confirms nor rebuts, the charges leveled by black activists that academic and professional standards are themselves racist, that there are significant numbers of racists on university faculties, that racism explains the paucity of blacks at higher managerial levels, and that there is a conspiracy against black elected officials. Rather than tackling the allegations head-on, Carter seems to assume them for the sake of argument, while advocating that blacks work twice as hard as their white counterparts, whatever the roadblocks put in their path. This agnosticism concerning the extent of societal racism may be strategic in a book whose aim is to win both black and white readers, but it is intellectually unsatisfactory. The charges are too serious not to be addressed directly.

Carter ends his book with a call for a renewed black solidarity, one based not on a strictly policed conformity but on love, shared history, and reverence for black culture. He believes that such a solidarity is compatible with a tolerance for diversity of opinion. He may or may not be right on that point, depending on how far solidarity is expected to override self-differentiation. What is clear is Carter's own commitment to his people. His book, written from the heart as well as the mind, shows in its very divisions and contradictions the conflicts tearing at today's black community.

"Practical Idealism"

SEIZE THE MOMENT: AMERICA'S CHALLENGE IN A ONE-SUPERPOWER WORLD. By RICHARD NIXON. *Simon & Schuster. 352 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

RICHARD NIXON's ninth book continues and extends a unique public career. Aside from Theodore Roosevelt, no other former President in this century has written regularly on the major events of the day after leaving office. Most—including Eisenhower, Truman, and Johnson—have maintained something close to silence on public-policy issues, emerging only to bless their party's candidates. Jimmy Carter has been active but not reflective. And unlike even Teddy Roosevelt, who after completing his autobiography confined himself to newspaper articles, Nixon has written book after book that takes the longer view.

In *Seize the Moment*, Nixon tackles the end of the cold war, that period with which as a politician he is perhaps most closely identified and whose passing has presented him with an irresistible opportunity to explain what American foreign policy should now be. The book is divided into sections on the former USSR, Western Europe, the Pacific, the Southern Hemisphere, and the Islamic world, tied together by opening and closing chapters on the United States.

On the Soviets, Nixon displays great clarity of vision. *Seize the Moment* was written last year, before the fight between Yeltsin and Gorbachev was over and before the entire country had collapsed. Nixon unmistakably saw both these events coming, and, more to the point, welcomed them both as conducive to American interests. While his final judgment on Gorbachev is overly generous ("one of the great leaders of the 20th century"), he understands fully that the Soviet leader was irredeemably wed to Communism and thus unable to carry the reform process forward. Criticizing the "many Western diplomats and leaders . . . obsessed with supporting Gorbachev," Nixon argues that "a helping hand to Gorbachev would have hurt the cause of democracy." The American "experts" who shunned Yeltsin as a boor he dismisses as "political amateurs"; an old political pro, he comments that "Gorbachev dazzles a crowd, Yeltsin moves a crowd."

The "stability" that was sought here by the Bush administration, Nixon writes, was at odds with our proper goal, namely, democracy. This required the "defeat of Moscow's imperial rule." Under Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, he reminds us, the United States supported nationalist movements and helped force the demise of the French and British empires: "it makes no sense," he

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observes, "to have pressed for the dismantling of the British and French empires, which were based on the values of European civilization, and yet to have attempted to prop up the Soviet empire, which was based on the ideology of Communism." He is critical of the State Department for missing this point and for picking the wrong horse in the Yeltsin-Gorbachev race, although—perhaps out of vestigial party loyalty—he never manages an unkind word for the authors of the American policy, President Bush and Secretary of State Baker.

WITH regard to Western Europe, Nixon emerges as a member in good standing of the postwar foreign-policy establishment. American economic and security interests in Europe and in adjacent areas like the Middle East are simply too large to trust to fate, or to the Europeans—even with their new confederal arrangements. "Europe needs a security structure," he writes, making a persuasive case that increased economic cooperation alone will not produce it. "In foreign policy, a single point of executive authority is indispensable for decisive action." That lesson, learned by Nixon the hard way in his own battles with the U.S. Congress, is applicable as well to Europe's new multilateral institutions.

For this reason Nixon wants to reform and strengthen NATO, and believes that a U.S. military presence in Europe is a central guarantor of post-Soviet stability. He would like to see the East European democracies integrated into NATO over the coming years, and he envisions a large "out of area" role for NATO covering the Persian Gulf and other trouble spots. On the latter point, his thinking is tactical as well as strategic: the American people backed expenditures for NATO and European security because of the Soviet threat; unless they see some other justification now that that threat is gone, their support for NATO will quickly fade.

Nixon writes as convincingly about the Pacific, a region he knows very well. Despite amazing economic progress, which he describes in detail, the region is threatened by political and military instability. Unlike many American observers who view the area as a relatively calm environment, Nixon is aware of the disputes which could reemerge and turn violent—particularly if the American presence is diminished. Given the lack of any formal organization like NATO, only American power, he argues, can successfully reassure most Asian countries that aggression against them is unlikely and that disputes will be resolved peacefully.

While offering no striking insights into Japan, Nixon has interesting things to say about China. Since the Shanghai Communiqué and the opening to China in 1972, he has been regarded as a sympathetic figure in Beijing, and has sometimes been accused here of being "soft" on the regime. *Seize the Moment* puts such apprehensions to rest. His goal is clear: "to keep the process of reform alive until the current hard-line leadership passes from the scene." The "moment of truth" will come, Nixon believes, when Deng Xiaoping dies, and a power struggle ensues between the orthodox Communist-party leaders now in their sixties and a younger and less ideological generation.

Where he surprises is in his suggestions for the interim. Taking a much tougher line than the Bush administration, he argues that while isolating China would be a mistake, human rights must be central to Sino-American relations. Nixon thinks we can foster peaceful political change in China through, for example, large cultural and educational exchange programs. He would put pressure on the regime by establishing a Radio Free China that would report not only the international news but especially on China's internal situation. Even more strikingly he calls for a Radio Free Tibet, a move he knows would infuriate the Chinese regime. Nixon also favors improving American relations with Taiwan, and enhancing that country's international standing. All in all, his views on China deserve careful attention—in Beijing and in Washington.

THROUGHOUT *Seize the Moment* Nixon expresses scorn for the liberal media, the State Department, and the academic foreign-policy "experts." It is therefore disappointing to find that he adopts precisely their view of the Arab-Israeli conflict—and all the more disappointing since his section on the Muslim world begins with a promise of originality. Thus, Nixon reminds us that the world of Islam is extremely large in geographical extent and population and very diverse, and he cautions against the error of confusing "Muslim" and "Arab." He finds only two threads linking the entire Muslim community, political turbulence and Islam itself. In the Muslim world, "demographic, economic, and political trends make conflict increasingly inevitable"; our fears about the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction are, he notes, rightly centered on Islamic countries.

Nixon's strategy for dealing with all this is sensible: build special relationships with the most modern and moderate Islamic countries, so that they may become "poles of attraction" in the Muslim world. The four countries he selects are Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan; over a generation, he believes, their success could have a profound effect on political evolution elsewhere.

But then he founders. "The Arab-Israeli conflict," he writes, "poisons our relations with the Muslim world, and undercuts our ability to cooperate with countries with modernist, pro-Western leaders. . . . [It] polarizes and radicalizes the Muslim world." This is a bizarre conclusion for someone who has just urged us to focus on Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Only one of those four countries is Arab; we do already cooperate closely with the leaders of all of them; and in none of them or in any other Muslim country, as Nixon himself admits, does the Arab-Israeli dispute lie at the root of domestic violence and political turbulence.

Nevertheless, he portrays that dispute as the "central obstacle" to a proper U.S. policy in the Middle East, the goal of which is to "en-

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sure the survival of Israel and work with moderate Arab states to enhance the security of the Persian Gulf." Yet when real threats to the security of the Gulf have arisen, as from Iran or Iraq, the dispute with Israel has hardly prevented any Arab state from cooperating with the U.S. Did Iraq turn down American help against Iran in the 1980's? Did the Saudis or the other Gulf states in 1989 and 1990, when they were threatened by Iraq? So obvious is it that the strife between Israel and the Arabs neither produces nor much complicates the real threats to Gulf security that one is left wondering what Nixon can be talking about.

In his opening and closing chapters, Nixon offers an overview of the current international situation, and suggests how the United States should deal with it. In general he dismisses the "end-of-history" school, arguing that it overstates the triumph of liberal democracy. Instead, he believes that international conflict will continue to be a fact of life: "in a world of competing states, clashing interests and national conflicts are inevitable." Military strength will thus in his view remain a significant measure of national power. In the face of these realities, he rejects any form of American isolationism, urging activism and world leadership.

To what end? Now that Communism is dead, we must, Nixon writes, redefine the "American global mission." The goal of U.S. policy must now be the expansion of freedom; we have "a moral imperative to use our awesome capabilities as the world's only superpower to promote freedom and justice." He dedicates *Seize the Moment* "to the democrats."

There is an obvious tension here, between Nixon's vaunted realism and this frankly idealistic goal. But he insists he has not jumped from *Realpolitik* to the camp of the "idealistic internationalists." Scoffing at John F. Kennedy's pronouncement that America would "bear any burden, fight any foe," Nixon notes that "Americans usually respond to the lifting rhetoric of ideological crusaders, but just as often balk at staying the course when the crusade hits tough going." This has been a key worry throughout his career, and he tries to explain here that he has always sought a difficult balance between engagement and overcommitment.

As he tells it, the Nixon Doctrine, establishing proxies of American power around the world, was no blueprint for deserting American commitments, but "actually outlined the only sound basis for a sustained U.S. engagement in the third world as a whole and the Persian Gulf in particular." His views have remained unchanged since the doctrine was formulated in 1971. What has changed is world politics. When nuclear war was the risk, and the challenge of Communism was before us, security problems left little room for elevating issues of human rights. Now, however, we are freer to underscore the moral element in American foreign policy.

It is an interesting calculation: there is a limited American tolerance for engagement abroad, and in Nixon's days as President our security concerns pushed that tolerance to the limit. While not offered as such, this is Nixon's response to critics who attacked his foreign policy as insensitive to human rights at best and amoral at worst. It is certainly the best answer he has given.

With the debate on realism and idealism in U.S. foreign policy heating up, Nixon's move in the direction of the idealist camp ("practical idealism" is his preferred term) is an event worth noting. A clearer statement from him on this issue would thus be very welcome. *Was* his policy as President fashioned with a view more to Americans' resistance to foreign commitments than to anything inherent in the cold-war struggle against Soviet Communism itself? Does he believe that realism itself now requires an enhancement of the moral element in foreign policy? Perhaps there is a tenth book taking form on his famous yellow pads that will answer these questions.

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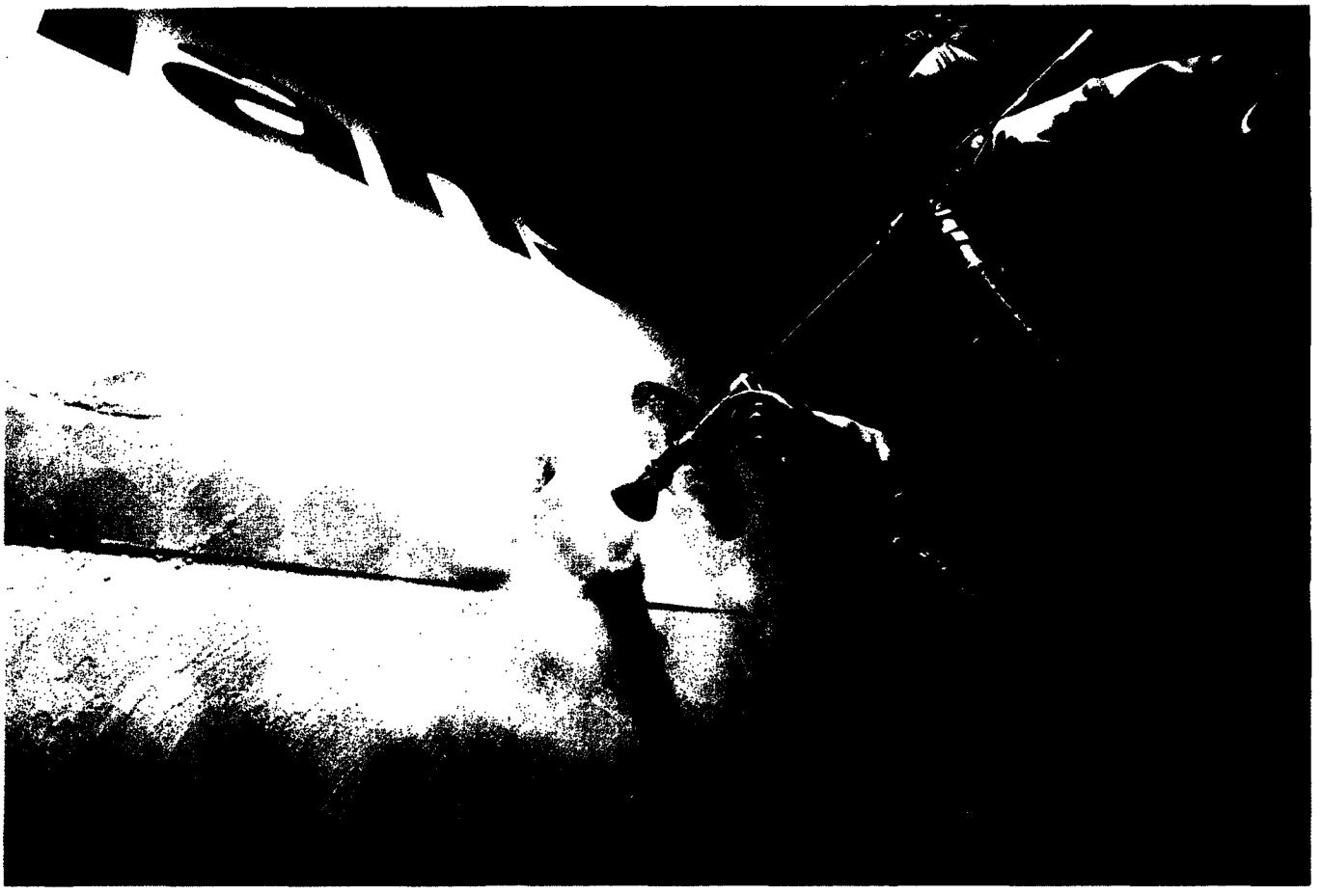

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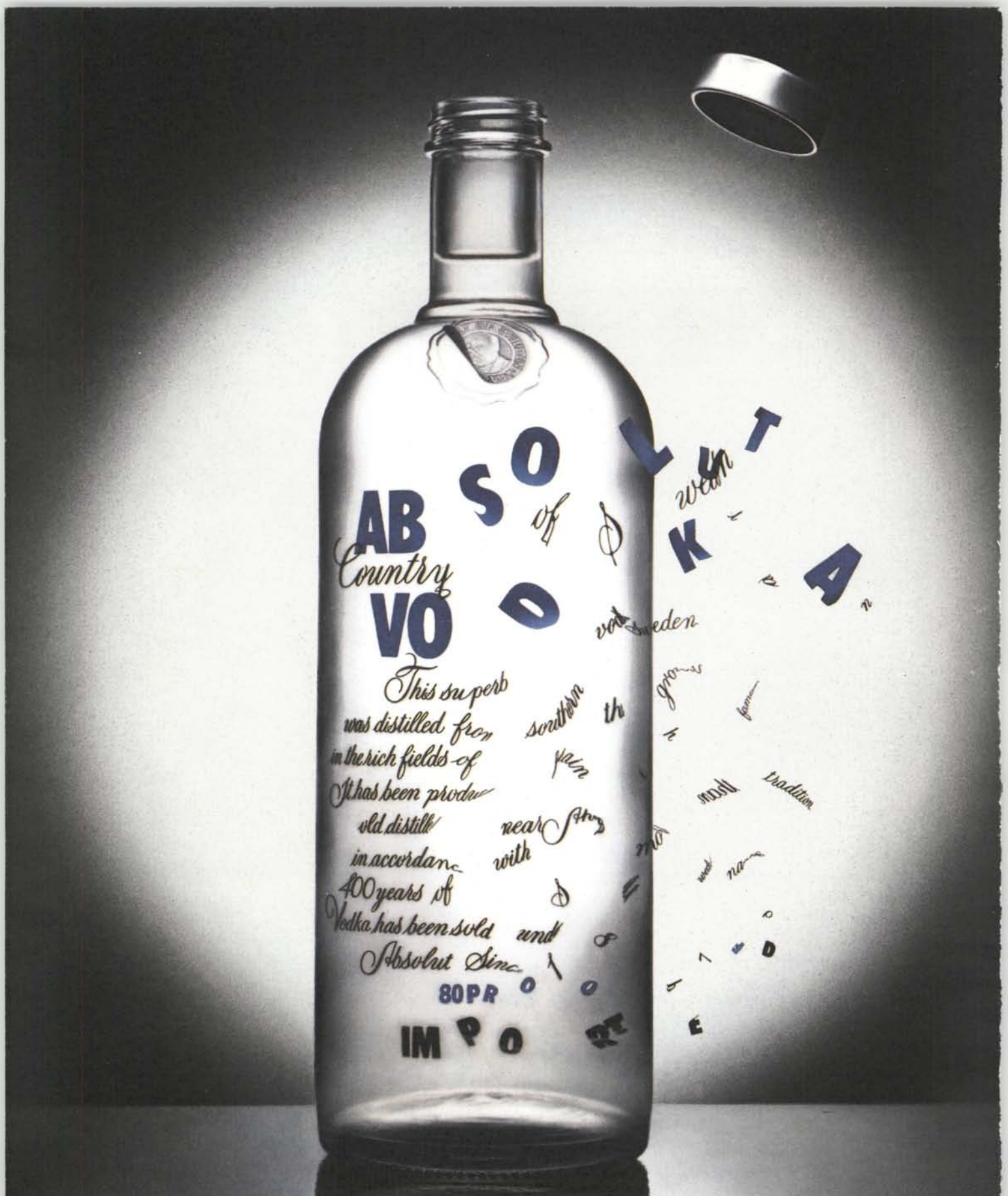

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